

EDITED BY
**KLAUS H.
GOETZ**

≡ The Oxford Handbook *of*
**TIME AND
POLITICS**

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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KLAUS H. GOETZ

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CHAPTER 1

TIME, POLITICS, AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

KLAUS H. GOETZ

TO SPEAK OF POLITICS IS TO SPEAK OF TIME

To speak of politics is to speak of time. The language of politics—whether domestic or international—is saturated with time-related references. Politics is about time pressure, urgency, crunch times, or emergencies. What happens in politics often seems unexpected, sudden, or unprecedented. Politics appears to move too fast, too slow, too early, too late, with undue haste or with unacceptable delays. Good timing is essential in politics; bad timing is frequent. Politics has a need for schedules, timetables, roadmaps, anticipation, foresight, forecasting, appropriate time horizons, short-term action, and long-term planning. It requires attention to future generations, to the immediate challenges of the present, and to the legacies of the past. In politics, time is of the essence.

The language of political science is likewise infused with time, whether it concerns substantive concerns, concepts, theories, or methods. Examples include empirical research on electoral cycles, election timing, fixed-term parliaments, leadership successions, or intergenerational justice; concepts such as eras, slow democracy, policy cycles, or incrementalism; theories that place time at the heart of their explanatory concerns, such as punctuated-equilibrium theory or historical institutionalism; or methods such as process tracing or sequence analysis. In political science, time is of the essence.

The emphasis on time in politics and political science has become more pronounced, as much of contemporary political debate and analysis has come to be framed in terms of crisis, turbulence, and emergency. All three terms are defined through their temporal properties. For example, the contemporary study of European politics and the European Union (EU) is largely centered on crisis, turbulence, and emergency. EU politics appears crisis-prone and crisis-ridden. The *Palgrave Handbook of EU Crises* (Riddervolt, Trondal, and Newsome, 2021b) identifies politics

in, and of, the EU as revolving around a set of partially overlapping crises. In their introduction, the editors develop their understanding of crises as “extraordinary moments,” characterized by threat, urgency, and uncertainty, where “an urgent response is required in an uncertain situation that threatens fundamental values or life-sustaining systems” (Riddervolt, Trondal, and Newsome, 2021a, 7). Turbulence is likewise seen as a defining feature of modern governance (Ansell and Trondal, 2017; Trondal et al., 2022): “turbulence refers to situations where events and demands interact in a highly variable, inconsistent, unexpected, and/or unpredictable manner” (Ansell and Trondal, 2017, 7, emphasized in the original). Already prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, EU politics had been described as “emergency politics” (White, 2015, 2020) “in which actions departing from conventional practice are rationalised as necessary responses to exceptional and urgent threats” (2015, 300), or “emergency-based exceptionalism” (2020, 39). The EU’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has further fueled the debate about the politics of emergency in the EU (Kreuder-Sonnen and White, 2022; Schmidt, 2022).

As these references to recent work indicate, political science has not been unresponsive to the centrality of time in the practice of contemporary politics. Some 25 years ago, Schedler and Santiso (1998, 5) noted in their “invitation” to concentrate on “political time” as a new field of research, “Time in its manifold manifestations represents a pervasive factor in political life,” but “as a rule, reflections on politics and time have remained unsystematic, implicit, and disperse, and our theoretical insights, conceptual tools, and empirical knowledge have remained severely limited.” Since then, scholarship has advanced in important respects across the subdisciplines of political science. For example, comparative politics and government has become increasingly interested in the distinct temporalities of different types of political systems, contrasting electorally bound time in democracies with the open time horizons of authoritarian regimes and their associated problems (Schäfer and Merkel, in this volume; Libman, in this volume). Public policy has paid sustained attention to the time rules that structure public policymaking (Howlett, in this volume), to the importance of legacies and time horizons in policymaking, or the temporal properties of public policies (Straßheim, in this volume). In international relations, after decades of neglect, critical reflections on time now drive both theory and empirical research (Hom, in this volume). And in both normative and empirical political theory, recent scholarship has highlighted the temporal subtext to many of its key analytical concerns, as, for example, in enquiries into the origins of temporal legitimacy (Santos Campos, in this volume), time and democratic deliberation (Fumagalli, in this volume), and intergenerational justice (González-Ricoy, in this volume).

Yet, although politics is saturated with references to temporal notions and political science has shown a rapidly growing interest in time-centered analyses across its main subdisciplines, there has, as yet, been no attempt to survey the findings of the different research strands; to outline and assess critically the “state of the art” in time-centered research in terms of key substantive questions, concepts, theories, and, selectively, methods; or to outline promising avenues for future scholarship.

TO STUDY POLITICS IS—OFTEN—TO ANALYZE TIME

The present *Handbook* explores time-centered research in political science across four of its subdisciplines to understand better when and how “time matters.” As such, it seeks to document and consolidate a growing body of knowledge and to inspire future scholarship. The breadth of contemporary concerns with time and politics is illustrated by monographs such as Paul Pierson’s *Politics in Time* (2004), an exposition of the key explanatory ambitions of historical institutionalism in comparative research; Ryan A. Vieira’s *Time and Politics* (2015), an exploration of the evolution of time rules in the nineteenth-century UK parliament; Stephen Skowronek’s *Presidential Leadership in Political Time* (2011), which centers on the analysis of “political time” and the US presidency; Christopher Pollitt’s *Time, Policy, Management* (2008), which addresses the importance of policy legacies in public policy; Alan M. Jacobs’s *Governing for the Long Term* (2011), a groundbreaking analysis of intertemporal choice in public policymaking; Kimberley Hutchings’s *Time and World Politics* (2008), which examines thinking about time in the study of world politics; Philip Seib’s *Real-Time Diplomacy* (2012), which analyzes the link between media time and “rapid” diplomacy; Stevens’s *Cyber Security and the Politics of Time* (2016), an exploration of temporal conceptions influencing international cybersecurity policy; William E. Scheuerman’s *Liberal Democracy and the Social Acceleration of Time* (2004), which discusses the challenges of acceleration to time-consuming democratic institutions and procedures; or Elizabeth F. Cohen’s analysis of *The Political Value of Time: Citizenship, Duration, and Democratic Justice* (2018). In brief, very interesting work is being done on time across political science.

The organization of the *Handbook* highlights that paying systematic attention to time in political analysis yields questions and insights that are of relevance to political scientists working within different theoretical, methodological, and epistemological traditions. Time is both a cross-cutting theme and an observational focus. One of the key aims of the *Handbook* is to “mainstream” time-centered analyses and to challenge the impression that a focus on time is somehow esoteric. Accordingly, the *Handbook* is organized with four main subdisciplines in mind, while giving sufficient room to cross-cutting perspectives. They include comparative politics and government; comparative public policy; international relations; and political theory.

In defining the substantive emphases of the chapters, four criteria have been of prime importance. First, read together, the chapters should be comprehensive, but not exhaustive; that is, they should offer the reader a broad-ranging survey of the state of time-focused debate within the subdisciplines. Second, the chapters should be representative in that the distribution of themes and approaches should be reflective of diversity in political science. Third, they should be innovative, so that while classical and traditional concerns are outlined, the emphasis is on more recent advances and cutting-edge research. Finally, the chapters should be authoritative, that is, of outstanding quality. These

criteria have also guided the selection of the contributors. All have explicitly addressed issues of time in their scholarly work; all are recognized authorities in their respective fields of specialization; and several have made landmark contributions.

Time and Comparative Politics and Government

Part I examines major time-centered or time-sensitive debates in the comparative analysis of political systems. The focus is on the temporal features of different types of political systems and of regime change; the way time rules and perceptions of time shape political behavior; the specific temporal properties often attributed to political institutions; and time-related methodological issues in comparative analysis.

Schäfer and Merkel (in this volume) enquire into “the temporal constitution of democracies.” They make two main points. First, democracies are characterized by their “specific institutionalization of time” and distinct “temporal routines.” The most important feature is that political power is limited in time through regular elections: “Political authority has to be revocable within regular intervals. . . . The limitations by design can stabilize and legitimize democratic systems.” Second, contemporary democracies face major “temporal challenges . . . in terms of acceleration, desynchronization, emergency politics, and systemic crises” that may overstretch their “temporal adaptability.” Hence, the “legitimacy and stability of democracies hinge on how successful they can maintain and, if necessary, reform and innovate their temporal structures and practices.”

Libman’s chapter (in this volume) examines the “temporality of authoritarian regimes.” He first highlights “the evolution of authoritarian regimes toward individual or collective rule,” the importance of “regime cycles,” and “succession crises associated with the death or resignation of leaders.” Turning to the policy effects of authoritarian rule, he considers the very controversial question of whether autocracies might be better at dealing with long-term policy challenges than democracies and concludes with “substantial doubts”: “While their leaders are free from the pressures of electoral cycles, they rarely have incentives to stick to particular policies over a long period of time. Even if long-term policies are in their interests, it is not clear whether these policies will achieve the desired effect. . . . And in some cases, the time horizon of autocrats is actually rather short, because of general instability of the regime or because of old age.”

Wilson (in this volume) explores “time and regime change,” with a focus on transitions from authoritarian rule. He emphasizes that “the multitudinous research on political regime change . . . is interlaced with the concepts of process and time” and then engages in a detailed empirical analysis of the roles of parties and legislatures in authoritarian regimes that draws on original data. The main aim is to test the idea that political parties and legislatures may serve “to extend the life of nondemocratic regimes” through their ability to “co-opt, coordinate, and sustain.” The empirical discussion suggests that the impact of parties and legislatures is differential. As regards legislatures, “legislative autocracy is related to horizontal accountability and elite pacts that historically characterized state building and patterns of regime change.”

The following four chapters examine the impact of time in democratic settings. Schleiter (in this volume) examines “endogenous and exogenous election timing” in democracies. The discussion highlights that election timing—both fixed and flexible—has profound implications for both politics and policy. As such, “election timing rules are some of the most fundamental and consequential prerogatives in a democracy. . . . They condition the nature and frequency of early elections, shape the mechanisms that are available for gridlock resolution, the electoral prospects of governments, legislative bargaining, and policy cycles . . . election timing rules may be as consequential as electoral systems in shaping democratic representation and accountability as well as political outcomes that affect voter welfare.”

The linkages between time rules and their effects are also stressed in Koß’s analysis of “time rules and time budgets in legislatures.” Koß notes that “with respect to lawmaking, the plenary bottleneck of legislatures renders these the temporally most vulnerable political institution.” To deal with this vulnerability, legislatures can shape time rules and budgets in three basic ways: to introduce “temporal privileges” for certain actors (such as allowing governments control over the legislative timetable); to create “additional time,” notably through empowering committees; and by bypassing the legislature, either through the delegation of legislature to the executive or, *de facto*, through the strict enforcement of party discipline. Contrary to what the popular deparliamentarization thesis suggests, “legislators seemingly continue to be masters of their own time. . . . Time rules and time budgets still serve as mechanisms collectively enabling legislators to identify shared understandings of their political tasks.”

Time rules and time budgets are also the focus in Willumsen’s (in this volume) discussion of “staggered terms in majoritarian and nonmajoritarian institutions.” As Willumsen notes, staggered membership renewal is frequent in political institutions, both elected, such as second parliamentary chambers with different “classes” of senators that come up for re-election at different times, and nonelected, such as the members of central bank councils or supreme courts. Yet “the effects of staggered terms in both majoritarian and nonmajoritarian institutions remain relatively unexplored.” Although staggering in legislatures is frequent—and often seen as a way to provide stability and continuity in relation to the lower chamber—“the comparative analysis of staggered terms is . . . still in its infancy.”

Skowronek’s chapter (in this volume) builds on his influential work on political time in the United States. He discusses the four temporalities of “political leadership in the American presidency,” defined through term of office, succession, sequence, and “thickening,” that is, progressive institutionalization. Skowronek’s time-centered analysis of the presidency highlights the constraints on short-term transformative action that these temporalities impose: “Constitutional arrangements that prioritize stability, protect established authority, and hold onto received commitments mediate and complicate regular adjustments to changing times. . . . Cycles of degeneration and reconstruction typically reach across decades, a tenacious new ordering of political priorities decaying gradually before giving way in another sudden implosion and wrenching reconstruction.”

The final two chapters of Part I address issues at the interface of substantive and methodological concerns. Hanson (in this volume) explores “objective and subjective time in comparative politics.” The former is focused on comparative historical analysis, the latter on “how time is perceived differently by political and social actors with varying psychological profiles, risk appetites” or levels of education. He suggests that both strands develop largely in isolation from each other, the one understanding time as something that “can be measured and evaluated scientifically,” and the other “requiring us to interpret and understand various social definitions and experiences of temporality.” Integrating both perspectives, he contends, can help political scientists to “confront a question left largely unaddressed by both perspectives: just how do individuals’ varied and subjective interpretations and conceptions of time sometimes cohere into stable, collective understandings of temporality that can inspire and channel collective political action?”

Kreuzer (in this volume) delves more deeply into “varieties of time in comparative historical analysis.” He suggests that the distinction between physical time and qualitative historical time has helped to advance comparative historical analysis, with its key concerns of macrocausal analysis, *longue durée*, and “eventful analysis.” The latter understands the past as comprising “series of events with specific dates that are chronologically ordered and are compared across time to identify continuities and discontinuities.” Kreuzer offers a sharp critique of what he calls “frequentists” and makes a powerful case for comparative historical analysis based on “the corrective it provides to the stunted temporal vocabulary used in parts of the social sciences.”

Time and Comparative Public Policy

Part II explores the analytical status of time in the study of public policy, understood to comprise both substantive policy analysis and policymaking. The chapters cover established themes, such as political business cycles, and long-standing approaches to the study of policymaking, such as incrementalist theory and legacy-based accounts, and address novel concerns, such as the governance of emergencies. They also consider time-related methodological issues.

Howlett (in this volume) discusses “temporality and the analysis of policy processes.” He notes that policy analysis has seen a remarkable increase in work that seeks to describe and explain developments over time and identifies four analytical models that inform this “historical turn,” including the stochastic model, historical narrative, path dependency, and process sequencing. While the latter three have rapidly gained in prominence, each comes with its own problems. Howlett is critical of much of the path dependency literature: “most of the works that employ it in the policy sphere have tended to apply it unsystematically or to somewhat uncritically accept the analogies from the economics literature where it developed . . . even the work of its most prominent proponents in the policy sciences . . . rests on many unsubstantiated theoretical assertions and incorrect empirics.” He suggests that “process sequencing is, in fact, a

more promising synthetic approach, incorporating elements of path dependent, narrative, and stochastic models in a policy-relevant way.”

One of the most prominent examples of time-centered work in comparative public policy is addressed by Gonçalves Veiga, Efthymoulou, and Morozumi (in this volume) in their chapter on “political budget cycles: conditioning factors and new evidence.” They review the literature, with a focus on the question of whether there is clear evidence of opportunistic timing of policies; explore factors might explain decisions on timing, including political leaders’ characteristics, a topic that has gained in prominence in recent years; and carry out an empirical analysis of electoral effects across 78 countries and 42 years (1975–2016). Their analysis shows “that budget cycles are not universal,” but that election-year effects “are more likely to occur under certain politico-institutional circumstances, including predetermined elections, close (disputed) elections, majoritarian electoral rules, larger private benefits from holding office, weak constraints on executives, a high proportion of uninformed voters, and new democracies.”

Wegrich’s (in this volume) account of “incrementalism and its alternatives” draws attention to how public policies develop over time. He notes that, at first sight, “the associations between incrementalism and the politics of time are rather obvious: incrementalism stands for sequential, small-scale and slow policy or institutional changes.” However, this classical understanding “does not hold when including variations of incrementalism that have developed in the twenty-first century,” including “radical” and “tactical” incrementalism and incrementalism linked to comprehensive reform. Thus, incrementalism as a political reform concept can lead to outcomes that run counter to the expectation of slow small-scale change. For example, tactical incrementalism, as a “political reform strategy . . . might turn the received wisdom of incremental versus comprehensive reforms upside down. . . . Actors pursue short-term and small-scale initiatives to achieve large-scale change; that is, they act under a long-term horizon.”

The tensions between short-term orientations and long-term policy horizons also feature centrally in Straßheim’s (in this volume) discussion of “time, sustainability, and public policy.” Sustainability, he stresses, “is a matter of time,” with three dimensions or modalities: policymaking in time, that is, “embedded in timetables, procedural rhythms, paces, sequences, and critical junctures”; by time, that is, political “action that . . . operates in the mode of temporal manipulation”; and of time, which “creates temporal orders that vary across sociopolitical and cultural constellations” and are “themselves socially produced and reproduced.” Sustainability has become a central ambition of public policymaking across a broad range of policy domains. But, as Straßheim notes, depending “on the specific configuration, the dominance of one or more modalities and their interlinkage, sustainability is interpreted and enacted in very different ways,” with a key difference between presentist and transformative understandings.

The chapter by van der Steen and van Twist (in this volume) on “strategies for preparing for an uncertain future” engages with study of public policymaking and policy practice. The key question their chapter seeks to answer is how policymakers can “anticipate the uncertainty of the future.” Their analysis distinguishes between forecasting and foresight as two distinct approaches to anticipation. While foresight is about the use of

data to “initiate debates and thinking about possible, plausible, and preferable futures,” forecasting “results in statements about how things will be in the future . . . it produces probabilities, effects, costs, and benefits.” A key challenge associated with both is to devise organizational strategies that foster anticipation, with robustness, resilience, and adaptivity often seen as key. As van der Steen and van Twist set out, these strategies “present different instruments for preparation but also have their own specific distribution of costs and benefits.”

Issues of anticipation also feature prominently in Seabrooke and Tsingou’s (in this volume) exploration of “crises in time: fast- and slow-burning crises in the European Union.” The distinction between fast-burning and slow-burning crisis is analytical but also a matter of perception. They differ in their intensity, rhythm, and tempo: “Fast-burning crises are characterized by great intensity, explicit conflicts between actors on what to do, and the assertion of institutional authority or muscle. Slow-burning crises differ in being less intense in political and policy attention, relying more on expert consensus to establish policy frames, and felt more by the public in their everyday lives.” Seabrooke and Tsingou stress that “the same set of issues can constitute a slow-burning crisis for some and a fast-burning crisis for others.” It is precisely for this reason that “how a crisis is understood in terms of its rhythm, but also its tempo and intensity, will have consequences for the policy tools used, the resources allocated, and the constituencies mobilized.”

Maggetti (in this volume), in the final chapter of Part II, turns to methodological issues in his discussion of “studying time with qualitative comparative analysis.” He discusses how “time as an empirical dimension of variation . . . can be fruitfully studied with qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).” This is an important question given that QCA has become very influential in both comparative politics and government and in comparative public policy. Maggetti makes a strong case for the fruitfulness of QCA by presenting “research strategies for the incorporation of *various conceptions* of the time dimension in the analytical moment of QCA: duration, sequences, tendency, and timing/time sensitiveness” (emphasis in the original). As such, the chapter provides practical guidance for scholars who seek to incorporate temporal concerns into their research designs.

Time and International Relations

Part III discusses how different theoretical traditions in international relations as a subdiscipline of political science have engaged with issues of time. The discussion encompasses both rationalist and constructivist approaches and both empirical and normative accounts and includes international political economy perspectives.

Hom (in this volume) provides a highly instructive summary and critique of “time in International Relations theory.” He starts from the proposition that “while most do not acknowledge this explicitly, IR theories are deeply bound up with issues of time and temporality.” He distinguishes between “open” and “closed” views of time, the former

associated with indeterminacy and contingency, the latter emphasizing constraints, manageability, and predictability. This distinction “in addition to picking out key differences *between* various IR theories . . . also informs individual traditions’ *internal* debates” (emphases in the original), as his critique of realism, liberalism, constructivism, the English School, feminism, Marxism, and critical theory shows. He is dismissive of “critical approaches,” since “critical exemplars tend to be so committed to an open view of ‘the political,’ that they *empty* out time altogether, refusing to say what might constitute it, from whence it springs, and what its consequences are” (emphasis in the original).

Heldt (in this volume) examines “time in international organizations and international organizations in time.” The chapter addresses two main issues. First, it examines actors’ uses of time in international organizations, and especially international negotiations, with a focus on accounts that examine time pressure, time discourse, time rules, time costs, time horizons, and time as a resource. Second, Heldt reviews debates over what explains the evolution of international organizations over time. Based on a critique of the key contributions to debates about both issues, she sets out central “questions for the next generation of research”: “What are conditions of institutional stability and development? Why are some sets of IOs more or less institutionally stable over time? Why do we observe different speeds and scopes of institutional development across cases and over time? How do informal governance arrangements evolve over time? Under what conditions are informal institutions more likely to become formal governance arrangements?”

The close relationship between empirical and normative concerns that characterizes a good deal of time-centered scholarship is evident in Ish-Shalom’s (in this volume) discussion of “time and moral reasoning: contexts, narratives, and institutions.” He argues that moral reasoning is inextricably bound up with temporal contexts—hence “the need for temporalization when making moral judgements.” Temporalization involves the consideration of temporal contexts and of narratives. For such temporalization of moral reasoning to take place, international institutions are critical. The reason lies in their ability to “overcome the obstacles that impede the possibility of reaching agreements over temporalizing . . . institutions encourage moral agents and politicians to try and cohere together their conflicting temporalizations into one they can agree on, and into a morally functional equilibrium between temporal contexts and narratives.”

Normative concerns also inform Hope’s (in this volume) discussion of “time and global capitalism.” He characterizes “global capitalism as epochally distinctive, riven by time conflicts, prone to recurring financial crises, and vulnerable to collective opposition.” The distinct time of global capitalism becomes apparent, he suggests, when one relates what he calls four epistemes of time—epochality, time reckoning, temporality, and coevalness—with four materializations of time, including hegemony, conflict, crisis, and rupture. Drawing on a broad range of contemporary illustrations, his analysis argues that “global financial crises” are “recurring and unmanageable.” This is not to suggest “the existence of a single worldwide time.” Rather, “global capitalism . . . creates

various formations and experiences of time that are hegemonic, conflictual, and prone to crisis and collective opposition.”

Time and Political Theory

Part IV shows that temporal arguments are central to contemporary political theory, both empirical and normative. Classical concerns, such as the temporal subtext to the division of power, are complemented by novel focal points of debate, such as the temporal features of legitimacy and deliberation or intergenerational justice.

Scheuerman (in this volume), in his chapter on “time and separation of powers,” re-examines core arguments first set out in his book on *Liberal Democracy and the Social Acceleration of Time* published two decades ago. He notes “a series of widely neglected temporal assumptions in traditional thinking about the division of power”: “the legislature was supposed to be deliberative and forward-looking, the executive fast-moving and contemporaneous, and the judiciary retrospective or backward-looking.” These old assumptions still feature prominently even in contemporary accounts of the division of power, but social acceleration calls them into question. In fact, he suggests, if one “is to preserve a sufficiently desirable version of the separation of powers, we probably need to figure out how to fix its temporal clockwork.” In so doing, he cautions against putting too much trust in the putative “temporal efficiency of the executive,” notably its capacity for speed.

Santos Campos (in this volume) enquires into the “the origins of temporal legitimacy: normative political theory and time.” He makes two central points. First, “temporality, involving double regard for the past and the future, is a necessary feature of any normative political theory”; “even tenseless principles of legitimacy often depend on temporally related forms of consent to be binding.” He rejects the suggestion that there is a fundamental distinction to be drawn between theories of legitimacy that invoke time as opposed to those that consider timeless principles. Second, on this basis, he makes a case for a “multitemporal reinterpretation of consent theories.” One crucial aspect is the distinction among original, ongoing, periodic, and atemporal consent. His critical review of consent theories shows that “modern political theorists adopt more than one kind of consent as relevant to political legitimacy. Modern consent theories are inherently multitemporal.”

Fumagalli (in this volume) turns our attention to “time and democratic deliberation.” He notes that deliberative democracy has “received ever-increasing attention in political science, sociology, and policymaking.” Scholars have not been oblivious to time in their accounts. Thus, “deliberative democrats have studied deliberation *in* time” and have “investigated deliberation *through* time” (emphases in the original). The former has involved the development of “sequential models . . . in large-scale deliberative systems,” the latter has “drawn attention to the inadequacy of deliberation in an accelerated society.” However, as regards deliberation through time, two issues have often been confused: the apparent need for speed, on the one hand, and the duration of deliberation, on the other. Fumagalli highlights that in deliberation duration need not be predetermined. His praise of inconclusiveness in deliberation should “be understood as a celebration of open-endedness in a temporal sense.”

The final chapter by González-Ricoy (in this volume) examines a topic that has attracted much attention in both politics and political science over the last two decades: “intergenerational justice and institutions for the long term.” He reviews theories “of our duties toward future generations and when a focus on the short term in public policymaking may infringe them” and then considers institutional arrangements that may reduce “wrongful short-termism” and support intergenerational justice. They come in the form of “insulating devices” that “aim at extending the temporal gaze of policy choices by shielding them from short-termist pressures”; and “constraining devices” that “seek to bind elected officials to intergenerationally appropriate rules from which deviation is costly.” His review highlights that “these responses are not panaceas,” not least since their effectiveness might be critically dependent on other “institutions that promote intertemporally fair policies not as their primary goal, as insulating and constraining devices do, but as a byproduct of pursuing other goals, like electoral or government transparency do.”

TO ANALYZE TIME IS TO STUDY INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES, ORGANIZATIONS, ACTORS, IDEAS, POLICY PROBLEMS, AND PUBLIC POLICIES

The preceding overview of the contributions to this *Handbook* underlines the diversity of empirical settings in which political scientists have raised time-centered questions, both empirical and normative. Seven observational foci guide much of this scholarship: time embedded in institutions, processes, organizations, actor constellations, ideas, policy problems, and public policies.

Time embedded in institutions: The time-centered analysis of institutions, understood as systems of rules, both formal and informal, has long been one of the key concerns across the subdisciplines of political science. For example, the rules of procedures of government and parliaments are to a large extent about the determination of timings, sequences, speed, and duration, notably when it comes to the executive and parliamentary stages of lawmaking. Likewise, public sector budgeting is subject to very elaborate and densely regulated and monitored time rules that often prove remarkably stable over time (Patz and Goetz, 2019). In international negotiations, agreeing on timetables is key and “playing for time” is endemic (Heldt, in this volume). The concerns of time-centered institutional research mirror those of institutional analysis more broadly. They include the emergence, maturation, and decline of specific configurations of time rules, such as longer term changes in parliamentary rules (“time as a dependent variable”) (Kofß, in this volume); the comparison of configurations, such as comparative work on the rules governing election timing (Schleiter, in this volume); and the study of time effects

(“time as an independent variable”), as in work on the impact of staggered membership renewal on parliamentary behavior (Willumsen, in this volume).

Time embedded in processes: Process analyses often take formal and informal time rules as their starting point, but understanding the time-related characteristics of political processes and their consequences requires attention to many other influences, such as the intensity of ideological conflict. One example is the negotiations preceding government formation after elections. In the European context, recent research (Bäck et al., 2023) indicates that the length of time required for the formation of coalitions has increased over the years, reaching almost a year in extreme cases. Time-centered procedural features, such as the scope for acceleration and deceleration, the density of timetabling, and the question of whether processes are open-ended or have deadlines, have become important in describing the processes of government formation and help to explain their outcomes. As Howlett (in this volume) and Wegrich (in this volume) make clear, the analysis of processes is also central to the study of public policymaking; the time-related features of such processes are often critical to explaining process effects, such as the impact of sequencing on the substance of policy decisions (Howlett, 2009).

Time embedded in organizations: The organizational dimension of time has long been a major focus in organizational sociology and organizational studies, giving rise to a very rich literature that has examined the temporality of both public and private organizations (for a review, see Brunelle, 2017). In political science, the distinct temporalities of administrative organizations and their effects on public policy have attracted particular attention. For example, do nonmajoritarian organizations, such as regulatory agencies, adopt longer time horizons than organizations that appear closely tied to electoral cycles (Majone, 1996)? Or how do changed temporal practices reshape power relations within political administrations? For example, Goetz (2014b) suggested that political time setting, monitoring, and enforcement had progressively eroded the temporal discretion of officials in the European Commission, while central “keepers of the clock” at the level of the political leadership of the Commission had acquired greater power.

Time embedded in actor constellations: Politics, both domestic and international, is profoundly influenced by the temporal characteristics of individual and collective mandates. What matters, in particular, are the lengths of mandates, the degrees of certainty over their lengths, and whether mandates are renewable or not. For example, it matters whether a legislator is elected for a two-year term, as are members of the US House of Representatives, or for six years, as in the case of US senators. It matters whether terms are fixed, or, as in authoritarian systems, open-ended, giving rise to the possibility of “succession crises,” as the timing of the handover or loss of power of the authoritarian ruler is uncertain (see Wilson, in this volume). It also matters whether re-election and reappointment are possible. Longer mandates or periods of office provide actors with bigger time budgets that may make the more long-term-oriented but also remove a sense of urgency in their actions. Differences in lengths of mandates, certainty, and renewability lead to very complex temporal constellations in multilevel systems such as the EU, where 27 member-state governments, each running according to its own electoral clock, need to interact daily in the Council of the European Union and the European Council (Goetz, 2009).

Time embedded in ideas: Ideas matter in politics and public policy (for a recent review, see Béland, 2019), and time matters in ideas. This is perhaps most immediately apparent when one looks at ideas that are at the center of debates in political theory, such as temporal justice and injustice (Cohen, 2018), temporal legitimacy (Santos Campos, in this volume), deliberative democracy (Fumagalli, in this volume), intergenerational justice (González-Ricoy, in this volume), or moral reasoning (Ish-Shalom, in this volume). But temporality is equally embedded in political ideologies (Hanson, in this volume), guiding policy ideas, such as sustainability (Straßheim, in this volume), or political debates over reparation and restitution.

Time embedded in policy problems: The temporal characteristics of policy problems pose distinct challenges for policymakers. For example, some are permanent, and others are limited in time (although there may be uncertainty over their duration); some appear suddenly, and others evolve slowly; some are one-off, and others are recurrent; some require immediate attention, and others can wait (Seabrooke and Tsingou, in this volume); some may be anticipated, and others are unknown (van der Steen and van Twist, in this volume); and some can be addressed by drawing on existing knowledge and expertise, while others need to be tackled on the basis of evidence that is evolving continuously, perhaps hour by hour (think, e.g., of the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic). Much depends, of course, on policymakers' perception of the temporality of the problems they face, as is illustrated by contestation over the urgency of the "climate crisis."

Time embedded in public policies: The examination of the temporality of public policies raises a host of questions and has given rise to rich descriptive language. For example, what legacies, traditions, inheritances, past commitments, sunk costs, and path dependencies are embedded in contemporary policies? What time horizons are written into policies, for example, major reform programs timetabled over many years, if not decades, such as the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals 2030 that was adopted in 2015? Are policies and their effects reversible or irreversible? What are the timing, sequencing, speed, and duration of policy measures? Is the choice of policy instruments geared toward immediate impact or aimed at longer term effects? What are the distributional effects of policies over time, notably as regards the intertemporal distribution of short-term costs and long-term benefits? The malleability of the temporality of public policies is often central to the ability to reach agreements, for example by specifying long transitional periods that may reduce immediate costs. But because of this malleability it also constitutes a central political battleground.

TO ANALYZE TIME IS TO USE TIME-SENSITIVE CONCEPTS

Time-centered questions, concepts, and theories inform contemporary political science. Recent decades have seen a "temporal turn" in political science, spurred, in part, by a sense that politics even in mature democracies and in international regimes appears

to have become increasingly unpredictable, erratic, accelerated, prone to sudden disruptions, fluid, uncertain, and unstable. But while crisis, turbulence, and emergency provide empirical and, to some extent, conceptual foci, the temporal turn goes much wider, as it cuts across subdisciplinary boundaries, theoretical traditions, and methodologies. Importantly, time-centered analysis bridges the divide between empirical and normative perspectives.

Yet, if time is seemingly ubiquitous in politics and political science, often at the center and rarely far from the surface, are the insights to be gained from its analysis destined to remain “all over the place”? Is there anything to be gained from seeking to integrate findings to get at a “larger picture” and, if so, how could this be done? The case for integration is made powerfully by Schäfer and Merkel (in this volume), who suggest that there is a need for “comparative studies of temporal constitutions resulting in different temporal types of democracy.” Such studies, they suggest, should analyze the temporal properties of democracies; the “performance of the diverse temporal types in terms of their stability and legitimacy”; the temporal challenges faced by democracies “in terms of acceleration, desynchronization, emergency politics, and systemic crises”; and analytical and normative theory building, since “the legitimacy and stability of democracies hinge on how successfully they can maintain and, if necessary, reform and innovate their temporal structures and practices.”

Integrative endeavors at the level of complex systems are, of course, highly ambitious undertakings, which is why the study of the “temporal constitutions” of democracies and the temporality of authoritarian regimes (Libman, in this volume) has not yet advanced very far. The key to progress lies in the development of time-centered or at least time-sensitive concepts allowing for specification and operationalization and, as such, capable of directing empirical and normative enquiry and integrating focused observations to discern more encompassing configurations. While systemic-level concepts—and typologies based upon them—constitute an overarching ambition, domain-specific and issue-specific concepts are vitally important steppingstones.

The contributions to this *Handbook* underline the richness of conceptual language engaging with temporal concerns. In the case of some, the temporal concern is immediately apparent, such as regime cycles or political budget cycles; in the case of others, the temporal subtext needs to be explicated. An example of the latter would be “democratic deliberation,” where, as Fumagalli (in this volume) shows, “Deliberative democrats have developed sequential models but tend to think of time mainly as a background variable. Critics have drawn attention to the inadequacy of deliberation in accelerated society, but in so doing, have conflated arguments about the pace of democratic deliberation with arguments about its durational time.” Some concepts have become widely used in their domain of scientific enquiry, with broadly accepted definitions, such as endogenous and exogenous election timing or staggered terms. But others, such as time reckoning, coevalness (Hope, in this volume), presentism, short-termism, or temporal discretion, while suggestive and evocative, have so far remained largely idiosyncratic.

This is not to suggest that conceptual inventiveness is to be discouraged. For example, the distinction between “open time” and “closed time” in Hom’s (in this volume)

account of time in international relations theory not only helps to bring to the fore the often implicit temporal assumptions of international relations theory but also seeks to capture “real-life” differences: “The fundamental tension between open and closed time, then, stems from and reflects the persistent challenges of timing international politics, which are always complex, dynamic, and never really finished” (Hom, in this volume). In a similar vein, Goetz’s (2014a) distinction between responsive and responsible political time draws attention to both differences in the temporal structuring of democratic politics and foci of academic observation and analysis. Thus, the “timeframe for responsive politics is shaped by electoral cycles that encourage speedy action; short-term lags between political choices and their effects; and temporal discretion of decision-makers. The timeframe for responsible politics is characterized by time-consuming procedures; solutions that take time to unfold and are sustainable in the longer term; and the purposive synchronization amongst actors and across policy domains and levels of policymaking” (379).

The time-centered conceptual agenda that emerges from these brief remarks can be summarized by four terms: explication, specification, systematization, and application. Explication is required where established concepts in political science have a temporal subtext or a distinct temporal dimension that is not readily apparent. An example is Scheuerman’s (in this volume) exploration of the “temporal presuppositions of both early modern and contemporary models of the separation of powers” and “the separation of powers’ multifaceted temporal premises.” The need for specification typically arises when everyday time-related or time-centered terms that are open to a wide range of understandings and interpretations are employed in scientific analyses. For example, as noted earlier, the notion of “turbulence” is frequently used to characterize contemporary politics, but it is often left unspecified, so that the observational foci and degrees of turbulence remain unclear.

Systematization refers to two interlinked conceptual tasks. First, there is a need for clustering closely related, partially overlapping, or even largely interchangeable time-centered concepts, so that a map of concepts capable of guiding empirical and normative enquiry emerges. Second, systematization requires us to distinguish concepts in terms of their scope. There are concepts the application of which is restricted to specific issues, such as staggering (Willumsen, in this volume); specific domains, such as political business cycles (Goncalves Veiga, Efthymoulou, and Morozumi, in this volume); and subdisciplines, such as policy time (Howlett, in this volume). Other time-centered concepts transcend such boundaries and are, as such, able to inspire cross-cutting work and, perhaps more importantly, to integrate empirical and normative observations that may, at first sight, appear disparate. Examples of such integrative, systemic concepts include incrementalism (Wegrich, in this volume); sustainability (Straßheim, in this volume); or timescape (Adam, 1998, 2004, 2008), “a cluster of temporal features, each implicated in all the others, but not necessarily of equal importance in each instance” (Adam, 2008, 143) whose central dimensions include time frames, temporality, timing, tempo, duration, sequence, and temporal modalities (Adam, 2008) (see Meyer-Sahling and Goetz, 2009 for a discussion of timescapes in the EU).

Finally, although time-centered research is replete with concepts that are more or less clearly defined, major studies that systematically seek to elaborate a core concept, identify its central dimensions, operationalize and, where appropriate, measure observations are rare. Allusion is frequent, and systematic application is the exception, a point highlighted by Kreuzer (in this volume). An example of work where a central time-centered concept has been used to inform systematic empirical research is research on “staggering,” that is, staggered membership renewal in the upper chambers of bicameral parliaments, and its effects on legislative activity (Willumsen and Goetz, 2015, 2019; Willumsen, Stecker, and Goetz, 2018). If research on time and politics is to flourish, commonly agreed-upon concepts that are applied consistently are required so that empirical knowledge can be accumulated and, where necessary, revised.

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PART I

TIME AND
COMPARATIVE
POLITICS AND
GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 2

THE TEMPORAL CONSTITUTION OF DEMOCRACIES

ANDREAS SCHÄFER AND WOLFGANG MERKEL

THE specific institutionalization of time is a major defining element of democracies and, consequently, a sometimes vulnerable condition of their quality and stability. This chapter will cover both aspects: the regular temporal routines of democratic systems and the systemic or exceptional time challenges democracies face today. The guiding question will be to what extent temporal structures and dynamics promote or undermine democratic stability and legitimacy.

In the first part of the chapter, we systematically review what perspectives in the literature exist on how democracies institutionalize time in their regular procedures and practices. Here, we look at the temporal constitution of democracies in two dimensions. In the synchronic dimension, we ask for the time requirements of democratic participation, representation, and decision-making and address the timed relationship between different institutional levels and actors of the democratic system. In the diachronic dimension, we ask for the time horizons that temporal constitutions of democracies create for political actors. First, we survey literature that deals with aspects of electoral cycles which influence the future-oriented perspectives of political actors. Second, we ask how past experiences impact the way democracies deal with present conditions.

In the second part of the chapter, we turn to debates on temporal challenges for democracies. These can be found in two strands of research. The first originates from the observation of a rapid acceleration of economic and cultural developments in late modernity. It results in a supposed desynchronization scenario that sees democratic politics as systemically anachronistic. We reconstruct and critically discuss these arguments, pointing out both the temporal vulnerabilities and adaptabilities of democratic systems. The second relates to problems created by exceptional situations of crisis. On the one hand, we will cover the discussion about states of emergency; on the other hand, we will

ask how the temporal dimension relates to the quality of democratic transitions. Based on these two parts, we will draw some conclusions for future research.

DEMOCRACIES AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF TIME

Time is both an enabling and constraining resource in the political process. For example, the establishment of representative relations between politicians and citizens needs at least a certain amount of time, while the time budget available to achieve this goal is limited by the duration of election terms but also by the attentiveness of the audience or by time requirements of other tasks that representatives have to fulfill. Partly outer circumstances such as the complexity of a political task, and partly political institutions such as electoral cycles make time a scarce resource in the democratic process. Democracies institutionalize time in specific ways. Linz famously defined democracy as “government pro tempore” (Linz, 1998, 19). Political authority has to be revocable within regular intervals. If we follow this claim, temporal limitations are an important means to secure the democratic character of the polity. These limitations by design can stabilize and legitimize democratic systems. For that, however, the specific temporal institutions have to be sensitive to and interact constructively with time requirements of both upcoming political tasks and diverse democratic practices.

When we look at the temporal constitution of democracies, we often encounter a fine-tuned balance of temporal structures. Rights for initiating legislative processes, the standard sequencing of legislative phases, competences for setting limits to time budgets, or ways of timing electoral cycles are all rules that structure and constrain democratic processes, practices, and power relations. We still know too little about the intricate mechanisms that these structures create and the implications they have for the stability of democratic systems. However, the preliminary theoretical and empirical evidence we have suggests that rhythms created by temporal constitutions can help stabilize democratic systems and create legitimacy but that they are also critical points where moments of democratic crisis can arise. In the following, we breakdown this complex picture into a synchronic and diachronic dimension.

The Synchronic Dimension: Timed Relationships

In the synchronic dimension, we ask for the temporal relationships between political practices and political actors in a snapshot perspective. Time requirements and constraints are determined by specific demands of political tasks and the typical duration of unfolding political practices, on the one hand, and by institutional rules and strategic decisions of political actors within the political process, on the other hand. In the

following section, we will focus on the external challenges posed by tasks and practices. The subsequent section will address the question of how institutional rules and strategic decisions influence the time resources within processes of decision-making and the power relationship between political actors.

Time Requirements for Participation, Representation, and Decision-Making

What time do citizens need for democratic participation? How much time does a relationship of representation need to be established and stable? How long does it take to properly deliberate on a certain matter? How long does it take to reach a democratic decision? Political practices can be more or less demanding. Accordingly, their time requirements will vary. The decisive point is that their time requirements serve democratic functions of equal integration and collective autonomy. Time is needed to allow citizens to potentially have an equal share in the political process and to build proper judgments for their collective decisions.

There are slower and faster forms of democratic participation depending on how demanding their specific contribution to the fulfillment of democratic functions is. Democratic deliberation is a particularly demanding form of participation. Still, democratic theorists see deliberation on political issues in addition to aggregation of preferences as a central mechanism of judgment building for collective decision-making. They expect deliberative processes to integrate diverse societal perspectives into and mobilize relevant arguments and information for political decision-making (Habermas, 1996; Curato et al., 2017). Deliberation and subsequent aggregation need sufficient time for fulfilling these functions. Democratic theorists have acknowledged the fact that processes of deliberation need to be interrupted by voting for pragmatic reasons because decisions also have to be taken short of consensus in an appropriately timed manner (Benhabib, 1996, 72; Gutmann and Thompson, 2004, 18). However, a systematic reflection and problematization of this time requirement can hardly be found in relevant democratic theoretical approaches. One implicit assumption seems to be that sufficient time resources are (or must be) always available.

Other scholars look at practices of judgment building under the condition of scarce resources. Often conceived as a problem of information acquisition, this research can be translated into time concerns as well: How can citizens reach proper judgments when they do not have the time or capacity to collect and evaluate respective pieces of information properly? An answer is that citizens use information shortcuts. Lupia (1994) found in a study on voting decisions in a referendum in California that uninformed voters could use extant cues as information shortcuts in order to come to the same conclusions as voters who were highly informed concerning the matter under consideration. Lau and Redlawsk (2006) both substantiate and differentiate the claim that citizens use information shortcuts in their voting decisions. They find in experiments that such shortcuts can provide valuable means for reaching judgments in complex issues under the condition of uncertainty but also that mainly people with political expertise can use them for the own advantage while they do less for other people or even

lead them astray from the correct decision (Lau and Redlawsk, 2006, 229–252). Some scholarly accounts stress the positive democratic potential of information shortcuts, for example, by looking at their contribution to an efficient democratic division of labor (e.g., Elliott, 2020). Others focus on their potential downsides. Stoker et al. (2016) show how these practices of fast thinking might be problematic for democratic legitimacy and argue that more deliberative forms of slow thinking are needed to balance their negative dynamics. This fruitful scholarly debate about the role and effects of fast forms of judgment building is far from been settled but has important implications for the temporal dimension of democratic systems and for the prospects of political autonomy of citizens in representative democracies.

Digitalization provides new opportunities for quicker forms of participation which can be valuable contributions to established practices (Fawcett, 2018), too. For example, time needed to form collective action and initiating mobilization can be reduced in comparison to older forms due to new communication technologies. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) contrast the “logic of collective action” with the “logic of connective action.” Through the use of digital platforms and means of communication, the latter can unfold more quickly and often mobilize huge groups of people in short time for a current cause. However, one can ask how sustainable those modes of participation are compared to more traditional forms. There are plausible arguments that if on-line engagement is not linked to traditional forms of participation it has problematic consequences for democratic politics. According to Hersh (2020), “political hobbyism” leads to imbalances in political participation because it makes large groups of moderate citizens spend their time following and engaging in virtual debates rather than in real-world political groundwork like volunteering—leaving the latter to more radical groups. From a normative perspective, White and Ypi (2016, 122–141) view parties as a cross-temporal project and stress the importance of long-term commitment in line with the norms of fidelity and sustainability: Parties do not only have to “keep up with the times,” partisans also have to fulfill “ascending” obligations to predecessors and “descending” obligations to their successors in order to secure the identity of the party. Therefore, it is rather doubtful that digital forms of participation can serve as functional equivalents to analogous ones. More likely, newer and quicker forms can complement and sometimes strengthen, but sometimes also weaken older and slower ones. Thus, shifting the range of typical practices of participation might alter not only the character of the democratic process but also the democratic quality of the judgments and decisions reached.

Looking at the relationships between citizens and political elites, scholars have drawn attention to the complexity of political representation. It has to be conceived of as a process extending over longer periods of time. Representation cannot be reduced to the moment of authorization through voting but has to be established in a continuous constructive endeavor (Saward, 2010; Disch, 2011). From a functional perspective, representation allows for expanding inclusion over time and is essential for collective will formation and decision-making in democratic systems (Warren, 2017, 48–49). Finally, the legislative process takes political time, not least because democracies regularly leave room and provide opportunities for oppositional forces to articulate their critical

interventions (Dahl, 1965; Blondel, 1997)—and need to do so in order to secure stability and legitimacy (Mair, 2007).

In short, political practices require certain specifiable amounts of time to fulfill their democratic functions. Thus, in addition to the temporal limitation of democratic rule, one defining element of democratic systems should be that they leave enough time for political practices of participation, representation, and decision-making to fulfill their specific democratic functions. In other words, systems that reduce the time budgets for these practices beyond a bearable measure will also reduce their democratic quality. Although time requirements of democratic practices vary with the complexity of the respectively related political task or object, they are also determined by inner limits within which they can fulfill their democratic functions.

Timed Power Relations: Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary in Multilevel Systems

How much time is available is not only determined by external circumstances but also by institutional rules and strategic decisions of powerful actors that have discretion over timing within and between institutional layers of the polity. The discretion over time is always linked to power, and the division of power has a temporal dimension. The different levels of democratic polities follow different tempos and rhythms.

Scheuerman (2004; see also the chapter by Scheuerman, this volume) reads the constitution of liberal democracy through a time theoretical lens. Accordingly, the traditional conception of the division of powers is mirrored in a temporal division of labor. Legislative, executive, and judiciary fulfill distinct functions that vary by their relation to time. Legislators are to be creative and future oriented, jurists past oriented, and executives oriented to the immediate present (Scheuerman, 2004, 29). This results in various tensions within and between these branches. Especially the legislation is caught in a paradoxical situation: it has to create laws that anticipate the future while accepting the modern view that the future is open for change. As a kind of solution, laws have to be accessible for revision by new majorities at any point in time. Between branches, tensions arise when the judiciary deviates from its past orientation and creates jurisdictions that interfere with the future orientations of the legislation. A pronounced tension also exists between the slow-going deliberative process of legislation and the executive branch that is regularly oriented toward fast actions and reactions in the present.

Of course, the temporal division of power is not always clear-cut. On the one hand, there is variance in how the temporal relationships among institutional branches are constituted. Differences exist between types of democratic systems in the distribution of formal time-related competences and in the degree of temporal interdependence between the branches of government. Majoritarian and consensus democracies are characterized by different degrees of mutual entanglement of competences (Lijphart, 2012) that influence how autonomous governmental institutions can act. Thus, these types also represent distinctive ways of organizing the temporal division of labor. Majoritarian systems give the executive branch a higher degree of dominance over other institutions regarding the timing and temporal structuration of political

decision-making. In consensus systems, the higher degree of mutual interdependence and broad involvement of institutional and noninstitutional actors result in a comparably slower process of decision-making that cannot easily be dominated unilaterally. Moreover, temporal power relations are determined by the respective regulation of office terms. Judges can hold fixed time or lifetime appointments, which potentially influences how contested their installation is. Terms of the executive and the legislative can be linked to each other and more or less coextensive as in parliamentary systems or independent from each other as in presidential systems. In parliamentary systems, the duration of terms also depends on strategic considerations regarding election timing resulting in more or less coalition stability (Lupia and Strøm, 1995). In presidential systems, the likelihood of the emergence of divided government potentially increases with the degree of temporal distance between the respective elections (Shugart, 1995).

On the other hand, the temporal division of labor is also a playing field for power struggles between institutional branches with partly diverging political interests, if, for example, there are different majorities in divided presidential systems. Time demands, budgets, and rules can be manipulated by powerful actors in order to push through their own projects or block alternative ones. Formal competences for initiating legislative and other policy-related processes can be used not only to set the agenda but also to create time pressures.

The governments of different democratic systems have more or less control over legislative agendas and timetables, resulting in higher or lower degrees of influence on legislation (Döring, 1995). Since time is a scarce resource in legislation, control over agendas and timetables codetermines the outcome of the process (Cox, 2008). Delaying processes strategically can also be an important means in power struggles between institutional actors. There are more obvious forms, including filibustering within the legislature and more subtle strategies. Kardasheva (2009) shows that the European Parliament uses its power to delay in order to exert influence on legislative outcomes in consultation procedures. Moreover, Rasmussen and Toshkov (2011) demonstrate that the European Parliament devotes more time to decision-making processes in which they have more power (co-decision procedures) than in those where they have less decisional power (e.g., consultation procedures). Thus, the institutional division of power potentially influences time-related strategies. Both the “temporal grid” of regular procedures and the instrumental uses of temporal rules structure political processes and their outcomes (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009, 189).

Restrictive time budgets and pressures in political decision-making are not only created by external conditions stemming from the urgency and complexity of political tasks but also a result of strategic power struggles between political actors and institutional branches. Since the strategic influencing of timing, sequencing and scheduling can have a potential effect on the agenda and outcome of decision-making, it raises questions not only of power but also of legitimacy (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Fumagalli, 2019).

The Diachronic Dimension: Time Horizons

The pro tempore character of democratic rule implies that temporal constraints determine the time horizons of political actors. Short time horizons can create incentives to orient oneself at short-term electoral responsiveness at the expense of long-term responsible governance (Goetz, 2014). The temporal limitation of political rule has a further normative implication. Not only the governmental office but also political decisions are—at least in a normative sense—subject to temporal restriction. Since democracies are “systematically biased in favor of the present,” they tend to neglect the future and impair the rights of future sovereigns; therefore, no popular majority can make lasting authoritative decisions (Thompson, 2005, 246; see also the chapter by González-Rico in this volume). Democratic decisions have to be reversible (Riescher, 1994, 230; Scheuerman, 2004, 32). Future majorities have to be able to follow new political directions that are to a certain degree independent of what past majorities decided. If decisions made in democratic systems have irreversible impacts that pose severe constraints on future generations and majorities, their democratic legitimacy is precarious from the outset.

In the following section, we will consider how future perspectives and constraints affect the way political actors act in the respective present. Then, we will turn to the question of how the specific past of democracies influences how actors look at and deal with present challenges.

Electoral, Policy, and Information Cycles

The temporal limitation of democratic rule has a cyclical character determined by elections and respective terms. The shape and effects of electoral cycles have received broad scholarly attention. A major concern of research has been the question of election timing. The timing of an election is either fixed by the constitution or to some degree subject to the discretion of current governments or majorities (see also the chapter by Schleiter in this volume). In the latter case, incumbents can determine election dates opportunistically because they can choose periods in which their performance is seen in a favorable light or in which the opposition seems weak (Riera, 2015; Lupia and Ström, 1995). Studies show that this strategy can result in substantial gains for the incumbents, increasing their chance for reelection (Roy and Alcantara, 2012; Schleiter and Tavits, 2016).

Apart from election timing, the subsequent question of how electoral cycles, and their duration and timing, influence the time horizons of political decision-makers is of substantial importance. A basic expectation is that incumbent governments and majorities will adjust their policies to short-term voter responsiveness because they fear for their reelection (Schultz, 1995). The short time horizons created by electoral incentives pose problems, especially for pressing social issues that require long-term solutions and often result in short-term costs (Jacobs, 2011) such as pension reforms or environmental policies. This often deplored presentism of democratic governance, however, is likely

to vary with institutional settings. Fixed terms or possibilities to reduce competition and to increase office security can contribute to incumbents investing in future goods with short-term costs (Jacobs, 2016, 445). Finnegan (2019) argues and shows empirically that competition decreasing conditions such as proportional electoral rules allow decision-makers to make long-term investments at the expense of short-term costs in climate change policy. In addition, nonmajoritarian institutions are sometimes invoked to counterbalance the political dynamics of vote-seeking political decision-makers (Majone, 1996), but such bodies are increasingly politicized as well (Goetz, 2014; Meiering and Schäfer, 2020) and thus at least partly subjected to political pressures and the logic of political cycles.

Furthermore, the actual electoral effects of government policies clearly depend on voter assessments that politicians might anticipate more or less adequately. To what extent are the time horizons of politicians and voters congruent? Studies show that voters are myopic—looking at events and policies that are rather close—but perceptions are not as short-termed as many would expect, at least with regard to past experiences. Wlezien (2015) demonstrates that a majority of American voters take into account at least the last two years in their assessment of the economic policies employed by presidents. Bechtel and Hainmueller (2011) investigate the question of how much and how long affected voters demonstrate gratitude for policies beneficial to them. Specifically, they analyze the electoral reaction after one natural disaster in Germany and find that the positive effect on the electoral result of the incumbent government is not only substantial but has repercussions for several years. Such studies challenge the assumption of myopic voters to some degree, although the question to what extent voters also grant gratitude for policies that promise long-term benefits at the expense of short-term costs is an issue that needs more empirical assessment.

Finally, the future-oriented time horizons of politicians and citizens cannot be understood completely without considering the influence of the media. According to Patterson (1998), the twenty-four-hour news cycle demands novelty, immediacy, urgency, and a singularity of reported events and is therefore unsuitable to focus public attention on important long-term development and problems. Political actors who have to adjust to these logics of news media production have to take this into account in their political communication (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Esser, 2013). However, in the era of digitalization, the stability of the classic news cycle becomes increasingly questioned. Chadwick (2017) suggests using the term “political information cycle” instead in order to capture the fact that news production is more and more characterized by an interplay between journalists, political elites, media professionals, political activists, and politicized citizens who communicate via traditional and new digital media formats and engage in constant and partly real-time information processing. This has important political implications:

Political information cycles rest upon a subtle political economy of time. (. . .)
Those who recognize the importance of time and the circulation of information—
when to act quickly, when to delay, when to devote intensive attention to the pursuit

of a goal, when to repeat, when to act alone, and when to coordinate—are more likely to be powerful.

(Chadwick, 2017, 101)

The political information cycle might create opportunities for broader participation, but it could even worsen the problem of temporal short-sightedness.

Historical Experience, Political Memory, and the Democratic Archive

The vast majority of the literature related to the diachronic dimension of democracies focuses on cycles that influence the future-oriented time horizons of political actors and citizens. However, democratic time is linked not only to the future but also to the past. Whereas democratic cycles structure incentives for political actors through their future expectations, past experiences influence perspectives and decisions in the present, too. Two strands of research provide anchors: historical institutionalism and the theory of cultural memory.

Historical institutionalism contributes to our understanding of the role of time in democratic politics through the assumption that interests and ideas of political actors, as well as conflicts and possible solutions, are not only determined by future orientations based on generic preferences but contingent on past experiences, historical institutional contexts, and path dependencies (Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2004; Immergut and Anderson, 2008). It helps, among others, to examine the challenges, successes, and failures of democratic leadership against the backdrop of long-term temporal development (Skowronek, 2008; Byrne et al., 2016; Azzi, 2017), to grasp the dynamics of stability and change in policies (Béland, 2009; Lockwood et al., 2016; Leiren and Reimer, 2018; Hogan, 2019) and politics (Immergut, 2006; Bulmer, 2009; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010), and to lead our attention to how political power is deeply inscribed in the institutional layers of democratic societies (Pierson, 2015) enabling powerful actors to hinder reforms or transitions from the political status quo (Capoccia, 2016).

The second anchor for the treatment of the question of how the past impacts the present of democracies are theories of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1980; Olick, 1999, 2007; Assmann, 2011). Although its exact meaning is contested among scholars, a common denominator of the concept is that it refers to memories that are to some degree independent from individuals and that can influence perspectives of social groups or whole societies. Collective memory—and all other forms of memory—is characterized by a dynamic interplay between remembering and forgetting (Assmann, 2009, 220). How and what we remember about our political pasts influences the possibilities we see in our democratic present and futures, and the control over memories is an important source of political power (Bell, 2008; Brendese, 2014; Verovšek, 2020). Collective memory-related research very often focuses on social remembrance of violent conflicts or transformations from autocratic rule (Misztal, 2005; Etkind, 2009; Assmann and Shortt, 2012)—resulting in politics of memory in the narrow sense. But we can extend the idea to other kinds of political conflicts and policy fields. For example, Pollitt (2008) traces the ways in which time plays important roles for public administration and

argues that policymakers can learn a lot by looking at the longer history and temporal contexts of political tasks and by taking into account past experiences. A precondition for this is, of course, that collective experiences are still available and accessible to present decision-makers.

Generalizing this aspect, we can use the concept of the “democratic archive” (Schäfer, 2019) in order to capture the past-oriented temporal dimension of democracies that is based on collective experiences and memories. The idea of the archive refers to the infrastructural character of a collective memory that provides possibilities of usage for present purposes. In this context, “(t)he archive is a collective store of knowledge that fulfills several different functions. As with every form of storage, it involves three main aspects: selection, conservation, and accessibility” (Assmann, 2011, 329). Thus, while archival storing is conceived as a passive mode of memory, stored content can be reselected and reactivated by individual political actors and groups. This “archive” should be understood in a broad sense, including both material infrastructures (e.g., parliamentary archives) and immaterial phenomena (e.g., collective memory or political culture). It is democratic to the extent that no political actor can fully control or even dominate it. Moreover, its structure and content are to some extent pluralistic since what is stored is the result of democratic processes and power struggles between various actors, groups, and organizations. The democratic archive is not only a result of political deliberation and contestation but can become a field of power struggles about the interpretation of past experiences at any time.

TEMPORAL CHALLENGES FOR DEMOCRACIES

A great share of the relevant literature on temporal aspects of democracies focuses on problems for democratic legitimacy and stability. First, we address studies that argue that social acceleration poses severe challenges for democratic performance, and we discuss theoretical answers to that. Second, we engage with literature that relates crises of democracies to their temporal dimension.

Social Acceleration and Political Desynchronization

One of the major scholarly discourses that problematize the temporal constitution of democracies is based on the assumption that different parts of modern societies accelerate the speed of their routines and developments to a degree that results in problems for societal integration.

The Temporal Vulnerability of Democratic Procedures

Do the time requirements of democratic practices and processes described earlier regularly meet sufficient time resources? This question is rigorously denied by theorists and

analysts of social acceleration. According to the “desynchronization thesis” (Hassan, 2008; Rosa, 2003; Rosa and Scheuerman, 2009), the timing of the democratic decision-making process can no longer keep pace with the growing speed of socioeconomic development and the frequency and complexity of the regulatory needs generated by the latter.

According to Rosa (2003, 7), “social acceleration is defined by an increase in the decay-rates of the reliability of experiences and expectations and by the contraction of the time-spans defined as ‘present.’” It substantiates itself in the acceleration of and through technological developments, of social change, and of the pace of life—three processes that reinforce each other and that are externally driven by the logics of capitalist growth, cultural innovation, and social differentiation. Against this backdrop, modern politics becomes increasingly “situationalist”: it reacts to short-term pressures instead of orienting itself by long-term goals of societal progression (Rosa, 2003, 21). The underlying assumption is that democratic processes are characterized by a fixed proper time, which cannot be undercut without abandoning democratic quality. But at the same time, the increasingly accelerating developments of the economy, culture, and technology increase the time pressure of political regulation and reduce the time resources available for effective political decisions (Rosa, 2003, 23): “In fact, the more pluralistic and post-conventionalist society gets, and the more complex its networks, chains of transaction, and the contexts of action and decision become, the slower democracy proceeds. Thus, while the speed of cultural and economic life and technological change increase, the pace of democracy slows down—and hence, we observe a frightening extent of de-synchronization between politics and the social systems it tries to control or steer” (Rosa, 2016, 37). Democratic systems, therefore, find themselves caught in a dilemma: either they maintain the quality of their decision-making processes and systematically arrive too late with their decisions, or they adapt their decision-making processes to the time constraints of other subsystems at the expense of process quality.

The desynchronization thesis has implications for the division of powers discussed earlier. It unbalances the relationship between the legislative and executive branches in favor of the latter, which is apt to quick and short-term action (Scheuerman, 2004, 26). Extensive and in-depth deliberation that characterizes parliamentary procedures is outplayed by quick executive reactions to short-term demands. As a consequence, legislative assemblies cannot fulfill their specific legitimizing democratic functions any longer and at the same time react quickly.

Scholars of social acceleration often refer to paradigmatic cases like the management of the financial crisis by democratic systems after 2008 in order to illustrate the logic and consequences of the desynchronization problem (Laux, 2011). In this context, Bohmann and colleagues (2018) analyze how the German strategy of building hybrid organizations, such as the German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority, that bridge the logics of political and financial economic management resulted in a synchronization of political decision-making and economic dynamics, albeit at the cost of widening the gap between practices of democratic deliberation and inclusion and executive decision-making. The authors claim that such strategies create a climate in which populist actors

who promise to resynchronize elite decision-making with the formation of a popular will can flourish. The relationship between social acceleration, desynchronization, and populism is supported by other researchers as well. Kuo (2019) argues that current populism is an expression of the quest for “instantaneous democracy” that is nurtured by technologically accelerated forms of communication, for example, via social media, and that is undermining the project of constitutional democracy, which is based on complex, multilayered, and time-demanding procedures for deliberation, representation, and decision-making. In a similar vein, Bødker and Anderson (2019) contend that social media fosters a populist communication style that represents a “politics of impatience” against the delaying standard procedures of representative democracy. Moreover, Kaun (2017) finds in a study of recent cases that the increasing political use of social media by protest movements creates a culture of immediacy that leads to a desynchronization between fast mediated communication and slower political practices of organizing and decision-making. Thus, the problem of acceleration posed for democracies and the limits for speeding up democratic decision-making have been acknowledged by various scholars, but this has also raised the question of potentials of democratic adaptation (Chesneau, 2000; Glezos, 2011).

The Temporal Adaptability of Democracies

How universally valid is the desynchronization problem? Can democracies adapt to the challenges posed by social acceleration and, if so, in what way? The desynchronization thesis has not remained completely uncontested. A common feature of this strand of literature is that it does not deny problems arising from social acceleration but demands empirical differentiation and an increased focus on the adaptability of democratic systems. Scholars have questioned how universally valid the desynchronization thesis is across diverse democratic systems and policy areas and pointed to the capacities of democratic systems to adapt to temporal challenges in productive ways (McIvor, 2011; Merkel and Schäfer, 2015; Saward, 2015).

Merkel and Schäfer (2015) bring to mind that there are decisive differences between important political challenges in terms of their pressing urgency as well as between democratic systems: climate change or pension reforms are important long-term issues that have haunted policymakers for decades, whereas short-term crises might be better examples for the pathologies of system acceleration; consensus democracies are generally slower decision-makers than majoritarian ones, and yet they often perform better in terms of efficacy and output legitimacy—and democracies, in general, do not necessarily underperform compared to autocratic systems, either. According to Saward (2015), the desynchronization thesis is too reliant on general macro-structural assumptions and does not acknowledge the performative capacity of states and political actors that can constructively change time perceptions. The resilience of democratic orders is furthermore dependent on diverse conceptions of democracy. In Saward’s view, a “slow democracy” can be designed on the basis of diverse mechanisms and devices such as decentralization and time-sensitive rules for delay in legislation. Other scholars add further insights for a more differentiated view. Riedl (2019) investigates the case of the

German Federal Parliament and shows that speeding up of law-making not always necessarily diminishes parliamentary control and inclusion, but that there are time rules and practices in place that help to monitor acceleration. Fawcett (2018) explores rapid forms of participation and governance that might have less problematic consequences and pleads for a politics of time that engages constructively with temporal challenges and solutions in contemporary democracies.

There is another blind spot in the desynchronization thesis. The diagnosis of acceleration theory with its focus on the linear progressive and future-oriented dimension of time ignores the past-oriented and historical dimension of democratic politics. Accordingly, a significant variance can be observed: political conflicts differ, among other things, in whether and to what extent political experiences have already been made with them. The democratic archive potentially provides resources for temporal resilience by providing opportunities for mobilizing knowledge, arguments, and identities acquired through earlier political conflicts (Schäfer, 2019). In other words, under favorable conditions, democracies can use temporal shortcuts by accessing stored political solutions that have been developed earlier via processes of deliberation, contestation, or negotiation, and that can be reused or adapted for pressing new challenges.

Crises, Transitions, and Breakdowns

In this section, we cover two groups of studies that discuss forms and implications of democracy in the state of crisis. The first addresses situations when established democracies get into a status of emergency through external threats. The second deals with questions of system transformation and quality of democracy.

Democratic Stability and Emergency Politics

In contrast to acceleration theory's diagnosis, the following discourse on temporal challenges focuses not so much on acceleration as a systemic feature and trend of modern societies but on systemic effects of exceptional situations such as crises and states of emergency. Recent situations, in which the call for exceptional measures arose, range from natural disasters to terrorist threats and economic collapse. The constitutional option of such states of emergency has a long history that reaches back at least to the ancient Roman republic, but the instrument is a feature of modern democratic systems as well, albeit not always on the constitutional level (Ferejohn and Pasquino, 2004). A status of emergency logically implies a regular legal status that has to be completely or partially suspended in order to defend it against current threats and to conserve it in the long run. The declaration of a state of emergency interrupts the normal time routines of democratic systems. It is driven by perceived time pressure and sets a new rhythm for political decision-making.

The "exceptionalism" of emergency, however, might be a mere rhetorical feature. A common theme of this scholarly discourse is the observation of an increasing normalization of exceptionalism. It identifies a new prevalence of a mode of governance that

rests on emergency measures that, in the long run, are apt to restructure the polity and create a new institutional status quo. This perspective on crisis or emergency politics shares with acceleration theory a diagnosis of increasing speed in which political measures are taken in situations that are defined as crises. It also stresses the accompanying strengthening of executive discretion while at the same time political decisions are dictated by circumstances and justified in reference to necessity (Scheuerman, 2004; Goetz, 2014; White, 2015; Kreuder-Sonnen, 2019; White, 2020).

In democratic theory, the reflection of political emergencies has traditionally been linked to the question of power: not the normal routines, but exceptional circumstances reveal where power really rests in a democratic system. Schmitt famously claimed that a sovereign is who decides about the state of exception (Schmitt [1922] 2004, 13). White (2015), however, convincingly argues that such a simple rule of identifying sovereign power will not suffice for the analysis of the more subtle contemporary emergency politics. According to White, emergency politics are not fully controlled by a single powerful actor, although certain actors such as powerful national governments might have special weight in it. In contrast, a range of political and societal actors, including the broader public, co-produce it by acknowledging the urgent need to suspend normal procedures and agreeing to the legitimacy of exceptional measures. Without this complicity, one cannot fully understand the collaborative character and dynamics of this mode of governance.

Other scholars provide support for this interpretation. Kreuder-Sonnen (2019) asks under what conditions emergency politics of international organizations, such as the European Union, are successfully enforced and normalized, and when they are contested and rolled back. He shows that the authority of emergency politics rests on successful justification based on proportionality considerations and the rhetorical power of the respective argumentation. Coalitions of actors that either support or oppose exceptionalism have to compete for the consent of the relevant larger audiences. Only actors that prevail in this legitimation struggle prove to be able to normalize a new status quo.

Unpredictable events and developments that are conceived or framed as phenomena of crisis might even restructure the temporal routines of democratic systems (Goetz, 2014, 392). They set a new rhythm for decision making that is dictated as much by external shocks as it is by internal political logics of democratic systems. Governments are typically not only driven by, but also drivers of, crisis politics. They use their ability for fast executive action to respond quickly to what is conceived to be an immediate threat. Knowing that their public support hinges on their perceived performance in such situations, they have a strong incentive to act immediately and implement instantaneous measures even if they only have a symbolic effect. In that way, executive discretion increases the speed of political decision-making, thereby producing the need for follow-up decisions and legal adjustments. This process sets parliamentary bodies and the judiciary under time pressure. Thus, critical events again interrupt the finely balanced temporal division of power (Scheuerman, 2004; Goetz, 2014). Governing by the state of exception in deep crises not only changes the speed of decisions but also

their mode. Parliaments are often marginalized and governments govern by decrees. During the COVID-19 crisis, several parliaments of the European democracies gave “carte blanche” to the governmental administration to govern by specific decrees (Merkel, 2020).

What does this mean for the stability and quality of democratic systems? Critics suggest that emergency politics are increasingly not restricted to rare situations but become a recurring mode of governance (White, 2020). The extension and “perpetuation of the quasi-authoritarian emergency regime” build up to a “ratchet effect” that cannot be easily rolled back again (Kreuder-Sonnen, 2019, 201). Either the people get used to output-oriented crisis policies or even demand them, as it was partly to be observed during the COVID-19 crisis, potentially resulting in a longer-term habituation (Merkel, 2020). The “hurried creation of new institutions” or “accelerated policy reforms” (White, 2015, 302) can have a lasting impact on institutional structure without being sufficiently accompanied by a process of public debate and contestation. The lack of critical democratic debate, in this view, obscures value choices lying behind policy decisions that are framed as necessary and urgent (White, 2015, 307). In sum, emergency politics could diminish both the democratic participatory quality of democratic systems and the balance of power.

However, emergency or crisis politics are justified to protect society from immediate dangers, be they economic, political, or biological in nature. When are emergency measures stabilizing democratic systems, and when are they undermining their democratic quality? If we look for criteria, much evidence suggests that the analysis has to focus on the temporal features of emergency measures. According to White (2015), we should ask if measures are conservative and restorative in nature, if they are temporary, and if actors are subject to democratic control after the crisis has been overcome. In times of deep crises, “time” is often a primary argument by those who govern more by executive decrees than by parliamentary legislation. However, if this becomes a recurring pattern, the loss of time can open a slippery slope to de-democratization.

The Temporal Dimension of Regime Transformations

Regime transformation is a highly complex process with varying rates of speed between and within its different phases (Merkel, 2010; Merkel et al., 2019: 1; see also the chapter by Wilson in this volume). The transformation process from authoritarian to democratic regimes can be analytically separated into three phases: the decline of the Ancien Regime, the transition from old to new political order, and the consolidation of the recently established democratic regime. Moreover, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are observing a slow de-democratization of some of the previously consolidated regimes, which can be called a fourth phase with an open regime outcome.

The decline of the Ancien Regimes can vary in speed. A long-term erosion of the authoritarian power structure is slow and can span years, as was the case with the Brazilian regime during the 1970s and 1980s or communist Poland throughout the 1980s. Other authoritarian regimes collapse at a much faster pace. This is true for those regimes that lost wars, such as the fascist regimes of Germany, Italy, and Japan in 1945 or the military

regime of Argentina after defeat in the Falklands War (1982). Some communist regimes imploded rapidly with the crumbling of the Soviet bloc, such as those of Czechoslovakia (1989), Romania (1989), or the German Democratic Republic (1989).

When an old authoritarian regime loses its grip on power and a new democratic regime has not yet institutionalized its new order by the first “founding elections” or a new constitution, that period can be called a “transition” to “something else” (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Klingemann, 2019). It can be quick if the Ancien Regime has nearly disappeared and the new democratic actors rapidly call for founding elections. If the old authoritarian elites still hold a considerable share of power within the security apparatus, judiciary, state administration, or in business, then the birth of the democratic regime does not follow a rapid “rupture,” but the oppositional democratic forces have to negotiate with the remaining old regime. Those “pacted transitions” typically at “round tables” follow a slower pace, as was the case in Poland and Hungary (1988–1990). Nevertheless, the average transitions to democracy take less time than the decline and end of the authoritarian regimes.

The phase of democratic consolidation takes the longest time. It may even never lead to a fully consolidated democracy but stabilize in hybrid regimes (Zakaria, 1997; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Schmotz, 2019) or defective democracies (Merkel, 2004) as it happened in numerous postauthoritarian regimes after the third wave of democratization (Huntington, 1991). Before a new democratic regime fully consolidates, it necessarily undergoes consolidation on four different levels: first, the constitutional level; then, the level of intermediary actors such as the party system and interest groups. Integration—or at least the neutralization of veto players against the new democracy (typically the armed forces, secret services, or police)—follows, and, finally, the level of citizens and civil society, which must develop to form a solid civic culture. This can take decades, as it happened in Japan, Italy, and Germany (Almond and Verba, 1980), or never come to an end, as seems to be the case in many unconsolidated democracies in Latin America, Asia, or Africa. There is no strict correlation between speed and success of democratic consolidation (Morlino, 1998). Nevertheless, timing and sequencing do play a role in democratic consolidation. If the founding elections were held before the basic institutions and procedures of the rule of law were established, there is a good chance that “electoral democracies” instead of “liberal democracies” emerge and stay (Merkel, 2004).

Many of the new democracies of the “third wave of democratization” were drawn into a process of deconsolidation or deterioration (Ágh, 2019; Morlino, 2020). But even the well-established and longer established democracies of the West suffer a process of de-democratization. The United States, UK, France, and almost all democracies of the European Union lost in quality of democracy during the last decade (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; critical: Skaaning, 2020). While the deconsolidation of the new democracies in Hungary and Poland has occurred at a rather rapid pace, we observe the erosion of democracy at a much lower speed. At present, no one can predict whether this process will continue or whether a new democratic turn will happen in the future.

To sum up, we argue that processes of system transformation, regardless in which direction (from autocracy to democracy or the other way around), run at quite different speeds. The degree of speed depends on the phases of transformation, the mode of decline of the Ancien regime, the strength of the change actors, or the international context. The causal link between the different speeds and regime outcomes is not clear. But it matters for the success of democratic consolidation whether the constitutional powers, namely legislative, executive, and judiciary, learn to mutually grant to each other the rather different time and specific speed (or slowness) they need to work properly.

CONCLUSION: PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Democracy is not only government *pro tempore*; it also constitutes its democratic character through diverse temporal structures and uses time resources in specific ways. The temporal constitution of democracies implies several dimensions and aspects. In a synchronic dimension, we have explored the time requirements of democratic practices and the timed relationships between actors and institutions in democratic systems. In a diachronic dimension, we have assessed how electoral and political information cycles determine the future-oriented time horizons of political actors and how historical structures and past experiences influence the democratic presence. The result is a complex picture of more or less fine-tuned temporal relationships within democratic systems and variants between such systems. These considerations lead to the following conclusions for future research.

First, a worthwhile endeavor would be to develop comparative studies of temporal constitutions resulting in different temporal types of democracies. These studies could take the different temporal dimensions as outlined in this chapter as a starting point. Based on this, the performances of the diverse temporal types in terms of their stability and legitimacy could be assessed and linked back to the respective temporal constitutions. Second, the temporal challenges posed for current democratic systems in terms of acceleration, desynchronization, emergency politics, and systemic crises need to be further assessed and differentiated empirically. Based on this, the evaluation of the capacities of democratic systems to adapt their temporal structure and practices, and the assessment of how this impacts their democratic quality is an important further step. Third, there is a need for a democratic politics of time that should be prepared and accompanied both by analytical and normative theory building. Taking into account what we know about the temporal routines and challenges of democracies, this might even result in suggestions for institutional reforms. The legitimacy and stability of democracies hinge on how successful they can maintain and, if necessary, reform and innovate their temporal structures and practices. However, since we have learned how

complex and fine-grained democratic time is constituted, all deliberate changes should be handled with care.

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CHAPTER 3

TEMPORALITY OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

ALEXANDER LIBMAN

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias* (1817)

OZYMANDIAS in the famous Shelley's poem is not dissimilar to many authoritarian leaders, who describe their ascension to power as a historic event and their rule as monolithic and perpetual,¹ but at the end experience their regimes' quick demise. And, similarly, Shelley's poem seems to provide an accurate metaphor for how authoritarian regimes are frequently conceptualized and studied in the contemporary social science scholarship. The research on authoritarian politics until recently has focused on the emergence and the collapse of regimes and paid less attention to what happens to the regime between these two points of time. While this approach has produced numerous important findings and enriched our understanding of authoritarian rule, there is still a substantial gap in our knowledge of internal mechanisms of functioning and, what is particularly important in the context of this Handbook, dynamics of authoritarian rule. Aside from the collapse and emergence of regimes, which internal changes do they experience? How do different types of authoritarianism transform into each other? Is there an authoritarian political cycle, similar to one existing in democracies?

In this chapter, I review the existing literature on the temporal dynamics of authoritarian regimes. I structure my discussion in two parts, focusing first on authoritarian *politics* and second on *policies* of authoritarian regimes. In the analysis of authoritarian politics, I address three types of temporal dynamics. First, I look at the consolidation of particular types of authoritarian regimes and, specifically, transitions between *collective*

and *personal rule*. Some autocracies emerge as personalist regimes but over time delegate power to a broader ruling coalition. Other regimes start as rule by a junta or a triumvirate but later evolve into the rule of a single dictator. Second, I review the literature on *regime cycles*, that is, periodic oscillation in the stability of authoritarian regimes. Third, I discuss a crucial point in the evolution of almost all authoritarian regimes: the *political succession*, its rules, mechanisms, and consequences. The analysis of authoritarian policies looks in particular on the *time horizon* of authoritarian regimes. Democracies are often accused of behaving in a myopic way due to the pressure of electoral concerns. Does this mean that autocracies are more patient and thus outperform democracies in some policy areas? In the conclusion, I summarize the findings of the chapter and propose avenues for future research.

TIME DYNAMICS OF AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME

I start the discussion with looking at the dynamic aspects of authoritarian rule. The following three sub-sections investigate both long-term unidirectional changes in the organization of authoritarian regimes and persistent fluctuations authoritarian regimes are subject to. They also address the challenge of power transition as a source of recurrent instability autocracies are subject to.

Between Personal and Collective Rule

Authoritarian regimes are strikingly dissimilar (and probably more so than democratic regimes are). Different authoritarian regimes use different mechanisms of decision-making, elite recruitment, and power transfer. A particularly evident distinction among authoritarian regimes is that between systems based on *personal rule* (that of a dictator or an absolute monarch) and on *collective rule* (that of a committee or a junta). Of course, pure personal rule and pure collective rule are ideal types rather than real regimes: even an absolute dictator typically has to accept the existence of some other power centers, and in a junta, some actors are more influential than others. Still, the distinction between the collective and the personal rule can be used to investigate the transformations of authoritarian regimes over time: whether the regimes move closer to one ideal type or to another. This is also the topic studied by an extensive formal literature (Gehlbach et al., 2016), which will be briefly reviewed in what follows.

There are multiple examples of transitions from collective to personal rule. The stories of both Roman triumvirates (60–53 BCE and 43–33 BCE) and of the English Cabal ministry (1668–1674) demonstrate how unstable collective decision-making bodies in autocracy are: they are plagued by internal conflicts, which ultimately lead to the

emergence of a single dictator. Acemoglu et al. (2008, 2009) offer a formal model of political dynamics within the collective leadership in an autocracy. Their conclusion is that enduring collective leadership of some sort may be feasible, depending on the initial power allocation in the coalition. This is because some members of a junta could anticipate that by eliminating the weakest members of their coalition now, they end up having no allies in future struggles and would be at the mercy of even more powerful members. Given this “shadow of the future” concerns, Acemoglu et al. derive the characteristics of possible stable self-enforcing coalitions, as well as preconditions under which the only stable outcome is the personal rule.

The opposite path (from a one-man dictatorship to collective leadership) is not uncommon for authoritarian regimes as well. Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong were succeeded by coalitions of elite members. In the Soviet Union, this coalition turned out to be unstable (with Nikita Khrushchev seizing power; ironically, he was later deposed under the pretext of the restoration of the collective leadership, which also did not last for long, with Leonid Brezhnev assuming control over the Soviet state). However, in China, Deng Xiaoping established a system of power sharing between different elite factions and of term limits for the leaders (which cracked only recently, under Xi Jinping). The research on motives and preconditions for power sharing in autocracies (i.e., on the emergence of the so-called institutional authoritarian regimes, see Pepinsky, 2014) constitutes one of the main directions of studies of authoritarianism pursued by the political science in the last decades. There are numerous benefits an autocrat can achieve by sharing some of her power with other elite factions. Cooptation could incentivize elites to invest the resources they control for productive purposes and thus generate more rents. It also increases stability and longevity of authoritarian rule (Congleton, 2001, 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Magaloni, 2008; Myerson, 2008; Svolik, 2009, 2012; Gehlbach and Keefer, 2011; Albertus and Menaldo, 2012; Boix and Svolik, 2013). Again, existing research focuses on how expectations of the future shape the behavior of authoritarian leaders, making them prefer certain institutional arrangements for their regimes. The question remains though, whether limited authoritarianism can indeed be self-enforcing or is merely an outcome of the transitory balance of power. The swift disappearance of the authoritarian checks and balances in China under Xi could be seen as evidence for the latter (Libman and Rochlitz, 2019).

Thus, both literatures (on the stability of ruling coalitions and on the power delegation in autocracies) show how a particular form of authoritarian rule can emerge as an equilibrium if actors are far-sighted and can anticipate the consequences of their actions and reactions of their opponents.² The notion of equilibrium is central for these studies: they typically focus on comparative statics and neither look at the paths from one equilibrium to another nor allow for repeating political fluctuations and instability. Once the equilibrium is achieved, it should remain stable in the long run, unless regimes are confronted with external shocks. From this point of view, the literature strikingly differs from the studies of regime cycles reviewed in the next section, which explicitly assume that constant change is an inherent feature of authoritarian regimes. Some studies theorize the paths of evolution of authoritarian rule (e.g., how power delegation occurs over

time) in a systematic way, but there are very few research projects which pursue this goal (e.g., Wilson, 2015). This creates an important gap in the literature.

Regime Cycles

The idea that authoritarian politics follows a cyclical pattern in its development is as old as the political thought itself. The Chinese concept of “dynastic cycles” is particularly telling: it describes (authoritarian) politics as a perpetual cycle of rising and falling dynasties. The cycle starts with righteous and noble rulers establishing a new dynasty. Over time, corruption and decay overtake, and the Mandate of Heaven is transferred to another dynasty. The old dynasty perishes (in wars or uprisings), and a new ruler comes to power. There have been several attempts in modern social science to provide formal models of authoritarian rule inspired by the “dynastic cycle” (Usher, 1989; Feichtinger et al., 1996; Saeed and Pavlov, 2008). Li (2012) offers a particularly interesting analysis: in his approach, dynastic cycles emerge endogenously as a consequence of power preservation logic of authoritarian leaders. Each ruler, while designating a successor, selects one who is somewhat less capable than the ruler herself. This ensures that this successor does not overthrow the ruler. Once the successor comes to power, she again selects a successor, this time even less capable than the one the previous ruler could afford. After this procedure is repeated for multiple generations, the quality of rulers declines to the extent that the dynasty falls and is replaced by a new one. Lagerlöf (2012) devises a very different model allowing for two types of temporal dynamics of regimes. “Dynastic cycles” describe a situation, when rulers are regularly overthrown by their challengers. These challengers eliminate the old (competent) bureaucracy and replace it by loyalists, who, however, cannot protect the rulers from new challenges. A more stable system emerges if a dynasty survives for a sufficiently long time: then bureaucracy is capable of accumulating expertise, and this, in turn, further increases the stability of the dynasty.

Considering fluctuations in authoritarian rule, which occur in the shorter run, Hale (2005, 2006, 2014, 2018) provides a particularly convincing account of regime cycles, which concentrates on the role of authoritarian elections—an institution present in the majority of contemporary autocracies (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009). Hale’s main research focus is post-Socialist countries. In these “patronal presidencies,” presidents, endowed with substantial formal power, also serve as a core of a network of informal connections keeping the regime together. Most of the time, these presidents rule unopposed, with elites being unable to challenge them. However, presidents have to pass regular elections. Even if these elections are largely symbolic and the victory of the incumbent (or a successor designated by the incumbent) is almost assured, the very fact of the possible political transition offers a focal point for the elites to consider possible alternatives to the current ruler. As a result, formation of opposition becomes more likely; under certain preconditions, the masses get involved and a popular revolution overthrowing the regime can occur. Once the regime passes the focal point of elections,

elites again unite behind the current president. Thus, “patronal presidencies” pass through periodic cycles of weakness and strength.³

Hale’s argument is applicable to a particular family of authoritarian regimes, which hold regular elections and are highly personalized, so that their stability depends upon the trust of the elites in the incumbent. However, precisely this type of authoritarian regimes seems to flourish today in many parts of the world. Therefore, one should observe similar cycles in many autocracies outside the post-Socialist region. To our knowledge, there is hardly any research on how Hale’s concept “travels” to other parts of the world: this type of analysis would be very valuable. Importantly, Hale predicts that the apparent weakness of authoritarian regimes at certain points of their evolution should not be seen as a sign of their imminent demise, and that observers may be overly optimistic expecting another color revolution or mass protests to pave the way to democracy. But at the same time, one should not overestimate the stability of the regimes in the middle of the cycle. In addition, there may be forms of political dynamics analogous to what Hale describes in other varieties of authoritarianism. Kokkonen and Moller (2020) offer an interesting discussion of leadership succession in hereditary monarchies, which somewhat echoes Hale’s argument. They show that deaths of monarchs are frequently followed by concessions to elites; however, these concessions are not always stable and are often taken back as soon as the new ruler consolidates her power.

There exist several other studies, which look at the cycles in autocracies tied to elections or term limits of their leaders. First, for electoral autocracies, the standard arguments from the political business cycle literature could be applicable (Higashijima, 2016). Similarly, to the ruling parties in democratic regimes, electoral authoritarian regimes invest substantial effort in ensuring favorable voting outcomes and therefore manipulate public expenditures and revenues. For Mexico, Egypt, and Malaysia, Magaloni (2006), Blaydes (2006), and Pepinsky (2007) document that the regime systematically increases expenditures and provides additional benefits to the key groups of supporters in years prior to elections. Second, political cycles can be linked to term limits in authoritarian regimes, if such an institution exists. Story (1985) studies political cycles in Mexico under the rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, 1921–2000). Under the PRI regime, the term of office for the president was limited to six years without any option of re-election, with presidents selecting their successors. Story shows that this system generates regular predictable oscillations between the “right-wing” and the “left-wing” policy over the course of the presidential term and affects the budgetary spending. Bak (2020), using a cross-country analysis, analyzes “authoritarian political cycles” in international conflicts. Bak does not assume the existence of fixed term limits but still argues that a typical “tenure” of an authoritarian leader consists of three parts: early power struggle, power consolidation, and power dissipation. The likelihood of an authoritarian leader to initiate an international conflict depends on the stage of this political cycle.

Finally, in some cases, political cycles can be observed at the subnational rather than at the national level and are triggered by the practice of appointment of local officials. For Russia, Sidorkin and Vorobyev (2018) show that corruption by regional governors

increases toward the end of their tenure. This is driven by the growing uncertainty about the reappointment chances and thus access to future rents. For China, Wallace (2016) conjectures that provincial leaders manipulate the economic growth data to a larger extent in years when they stand for reappointment. This is done to ensure career advancements (which in the Chinese system are strongly influenced by economic growth in the province). Guo (2009), for the same reasons, documents the existence of systematic cycles in public expenditures at the subnational level in China.

Thus, the existing literature identifies a number of sources of political cycles in autocracies. First, multiple studies focus on elections (or, in regimes where they exist, term limits for authoritarian leaders). Even manipulated elections force autocrats to adjust their public policies and increase uncertainty, possibly leading to greater defection of elites. Second, regimes can trigger cycles by imposing term limits on local bureaucrats; in this case, as the literature shows, they may end up with unforeseen (and probably undesired) consequences of these institutions. Third, and most intriguing, cycles may be an outcome of a systematic decline in competence of bureaucrats in authoritarian regimes (Egorov and Sonin, 2011). In this case, cycles are unrelated for formal institutions (elections or reappointments).

Leadership Succession

No matter which authoritarian regime one studies, leadership succession constitutes a fundamental challenge for it. When the old leader dies, the system is destabilized in a way incomparable with the destabilization of democratic political systems by elections: civil wars, unrest, and even state collapse can follow (Kendall-Taylor and Frantz, 2016). Different regimes deal with this problem in different ways (see a survey in Helms, 2020): some have formal rules (e.g., hereditary monarchies or regimes with clear term limits, where leaders are elected by the selectorate), while in others the problem of succession is resolved through elite infights. In some regimes, the leaders are expected to step down before they die, while in others they rule for life. In some systems, leaders designate their successors; in others, they refrain from doing so. This variation of authoritarian regimes and its consequences for their functioning have been investigated in a substantial literature, which I review in what follows.

The general conclusion of the literature seems to be unambiguous: instituting clear rules for succession (and possibly term limits) is beneficial for both the survival of an autocracy and its ability to generate economic growth. Frantz and Stein (2017) show that rules of succession reduce the risks of coups, since the elites are less likely to try to grab power preemptively. Term limits can be a tool of authoritarian power sharing, which, as already discussed, increases the longevity of the regimes (Ma, 2016). Zhang (2011) shows that term limits solve an important problem a successor in authoritarian regimes faces—showing off one's accumulation of power can result in repressions from the current leader, while keeping a low profile could complicate the transition of power (I will return to these issues in what follows). Besley and Kudamatsu (2007) show that

autocracies with term limits and succession rules outperform other autocracies in terms of economic growth, because of greater predictability and stronger incentives for autocrats to engage in growth-enhancing policies. Kokkonen and Sundell (2014, 2020) and Kurrild-Klitgaard (2000) demonstrate that a particular succession institution—primogeniture in monarchies—increases the survival of the regimes and reduces the risks of civil war after the monarch's death. If other authoritarian institutions exist (e.g., ruling parties), hereditary succession becomes less attractive for elites (Brownlee, 2007), since different tools of ensuring smooth and regular power transition can be used.

A related question is whether it is attractive for a ruler to appoint a successor, if she has an option to do so. Konrad and Mui (2017) show that the effects of appointing successors are ambiguous. A designated successor could become a focal point for those dissatisfied with the ruler and has certain legitimacy to challenge her. But at the same time, an appointed heir serves as a barrier for other challengers potentially willing to ascend to the throne. Whether the risks associated with an appointed successor outweigh the costs depends on the particular setting. Zhou (2020) shows that the conflict between the ruler and the successor depends on the point of time in the tenure of the ruler. If the ruler is young and recently designated the successor, the risk of a coup organized by this successor is very small—she needs to amass power first. If the ruler is old, the risks from the successor are much larger (as she had enough time to accumulate power resources) and the ruler is likely to be more concerned about it, but at the same time, the expected lifespan of the ruler is now short so that ousting successor makes no sense. A conflict between the ruler and the successor is thus more likely in the “middle of their relationship.”

At the same time, Abramson and Rivera (2016) ask how likely the successors themselves are to survive the battle with other contestants after the ruler dies. Their conclusion is that survival chances go up if the preceding ruler had a longer period of time to groom and train the successor—if the successors were unprepared, they were more likely to fail to take over the power. Interestingly, leaders, who come to power through a major regime change (revolution, uprising or rebellion) rather than through regular procedures of power succession, seem to have higher survival chances over the course of their rule (Sudduth and Bell, 2018). This is because leaders, who came in power during a regime change, have to amass a major coalition of supporters during their struggle for the high office, and this coalition is likely to protect them in the long run.

After the battle for succession is won, the question remains what to do with the surviving challengers. Historically, this challenge was resolved in different ways: some monarchs or tyrants preferred executing all possible rivals; some banished them; and in some cases, former opponents were allowed to remain in the country and were even integrated into the political hierarchy. High risks associated with losing the succession struggle are probably one of the main reasons why this struggle is fought so fiercely in autocracies and why candidates use extreme measures and violence to get to power: in democracy, losing elections is much less risky for a politician (Frantz et al., 2014). Egorov and Sonin (2015) show that executing contestants could have various implications for a ruler: if the contestant is not killed, she can try to resume fighting in the future; but killing the contestant, while removing this risk, increases the chances that in the future

a new contestant, if she emerges and is successful, will execute the current leader. In dynastic systems, the risks of leaving contestants alive are much higher and therefore it is more likely that the contestant will be executed.

In some cases, authoritarian leaders voluntarily resign from high offices, but maintain influence in the political system to safeguard their interests and interests of their allies: this has a profound impact on the succession dynamics (Jiang et al., 2020). In general, “resignation” from the public office is a rather vague concept for many autocracies given the nontransparent and personalist nature of their power structure. Thus, Deng Xiaoping has never been a formal head of the state or of the Chinese Communist Party. In Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev left the office of the president in 2019, but he still exercises strong influence on the national politics. Escribà-Folch (2013) links the fate of former leaders to the nature of authoritarian regimes (personalist and military leaders are more likely to suffer dramatic consequences after they lose power than leaders of single-party regimes and monarchs) and to the economic performance of the regime (economic crises increase the chances for former leaders to be imprisoned). Paradoxically, it means that precisely leaders with poor quality of public policy will have stronger incentives to stay in power no matter the cost, because the consequences of losing power for them would be most severe.

The discussion demonstrates a substantial heterogeneity of leadership succession institutions and strategies in different autocracies. While for all authoritarian regimes the transition of power from one leader to another constitutes a major stress, the ability of the regime to survive it (or even to gain new strength from the change of leaders) depends on a multitude of regime characteristics. Anticipation of the inevitable “succession moment” seems to be a crucial factor shaping the authoritarian politics, sometimes decades before the succession starts (for example, Hale [2019] offers an interesting analysis of factors shaping the predictions of the succession dynamics by the elites in Russia). Preparing for the moment of leadership change could force autocrats to appoint a successor (or to refuse to do so) or to implement institutional reforms. The resulting conflicts can themselves destabilize the regimes and lead to unpredictable consequences for authoritarian leaders themselves.

TIME HORIZON OF AUTHORITARIAN POLICIES

Democracy, as a system of “pro tempora governance” (Linz, 1998; see also Schedler and Santiso, 1998), is occasionally claimed to exhibit a bias towards short-term policymaking (Tremmel, 2009; Bührs, 2012) and an inability to take into account long-term consequences of the current actions (Kielmansegg, 2001). According to Sologoub and Mylovanov (2019), “in democracies, governments are short-sighted by design.” Short tenures of presidents and prime ministers in democracies and the existence of term limits should encourage democratic politicians to concentrate on achieving short-term

benefits, timing their policies to fit the electoral cycle and disregarding future costs.⁴ Authoritarian leaders often stay in power for a longer period of time than democratic ones and are not constrained by elections. Does this make authoritarian regimes better able to deal with the long-term challenges than democracies?

This question is very difficult to answer empirically, since the supposed “long horizon” of authoritarian regimes is countered by another feature of autocracies—lack of accountability and a small number of veto-players. A deficit of accountability should lead to the predominance of short-term policies, frequently changed if the authoritarian leaders desire to do so (Fearon, 1994). The question is therefore not only whether authoritarian leaders *can* implement long-term policies but whether they have *incentives* to do so.

There are indeed reasons for autocracies to think about the long-run consequences of some of their policy decisions. According to Olson (1993), autocracies will take long-term considerations into account because it allows them to *maximize their revenue*: by constraining the short-term redistribution and rent-seeking appetites, dictators will provide incentives for their subjects to be more productive. Olson’s argument, while compelling, can be challenged from several perspectives. On the one hand, long-term economic growth could become a problem for authoritarian regimes, if increasing well-being triggers demand for democratization (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006). On the other hand, the fundamental question remains whether the commitments of an autocracy to limiting rent-seeking will be perceived as *credible* by its subjects (Brennan, 1990). The problem thus becomes more sophisticated: not only should an autocrat have incentives to constrain one’s rent-seeking, but its subjects should also believe that the autocrat will do so in the long run.

The lack of credible commitments by authoritarian regimes and the tools they use to overcome this problem have played a particularly important role in the research on autocracies in the last decades. For example, this problem is central for the work on institutional autocracies and mechanisms of cooptation in authoritarian regimes (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006), as well as on foreign policy of authoritarian regimes and their international cooperation (Mattes and Rodriguez, 2014). From this point of view, a long-term policy orientation could serve the goal of survival of authoritarian regimes. Knutsen and Rasmussen (2018) consider the creation of old-age pension programs in autocracies (an arguably long-term policy) as a tool to overcome the credible commitment problem; it guarantees important social groups the opportunity to participate in redistribution in the long run, thus making them more willing to support the regime.

However, while these arguments suggest that the long-term perspective should influence policymaking in autocracies, they ultimately do not claim that autocracies are better at managing policies with a long-term orientation than democracies are. Environmental policies are, probably, a particularly suitable empirical case to study how authoritarian regimes deal with long-term challenges and whether they are superior to democracies in this respect. The idea of “eco-authoritarianism” is controversially discussed in the literature (Beeson, 2010; Shahar, 2015). Wurster (2011, 2013), comparing

authoritarian and democratic regimes, concludes that in terms of longevity of “strong,” ecological sustainability policies, there is no statistically significant difference across the regimes. Thus, neither democratic accountability, nor long-term orientation of autocracies, seems to provide a decisive advantage. On top of that, as Eaton and Kostka (2014) show for the Chinese case, the supposed long-term orientation of authoritarian leaders could be overcompensated by frequent rotation of local bureaucrats, which would make those more inclined to short-term policies (and this frequent rotation, in turn, could be a built-in feature of authoritarian regimes, which use it to keep control over the bureaucracy).

The contradictory nature of authoritarian regimes’ temporal policy dimension influences the perception of political risk associated with autocracies by private actors. Democracies are typically seen as being less risky, primarily because of greater accountability and constraints on the executive, precluding it from introducing quick and unpredictable policy changes (Jensen, 2008). However, the literature also offers more nuanced observations on this topic. Alexander (2002) claims that the “institutionalized uncertainty” of democratic regimes does not make them less (or more) predictable than autocracies; there is substantial variation of predictability within each type of regime. Li (2009) and Wilson and Wright (2017) condition the expropriation risks in autocracies on the specific characteristics of the regimes (in particular, the presence of authoritarian institutions). Petrova and Bates (2012) conclude that the political risk is particularly high in hybrid regimes, where it exceeds that of autocracies and democracies.

Finally, again, one needs to take into account the heterogeneity of authoritarian regimes. Some authoritarian leaders do not expect their rule to be durable: this should lead to particularly strong short-term policy orientation (since in autocracies, as mentioned, losing power is often associated with substantial personal risks and risks to one’s assets). These expectations could shape the protection of property rights (Clague et al., 1996; Bak and Moon, 2019), level of corruption (Chang and Golden, 2010), investments in public goods (Wright, 2008), pro-growth policies (De Luca et al., 2015), participation in international agreements (Blake, 2013), foreign direct investments (Moon, 2015), and quality of governance (Charron and Lapuente, 2011). The quality of public policy typically increases if the time horizon of the autocrat goes up. This time horizon, in turn, is driven not only by the characteristics of the regime but also by the age of the dictator. “The older the dictator grows, the more he will discount the future, and as his discount factor increases the more likely he will be to increase taxes and seize property” (Haber, 2006; see also Jong-a-Pin and Mierau, 2011). In monarchies, this negative effect is counteracted by the dynastic succession rules, with the autocrat caring not only about her rule but also about the rule of her offspring (Knutsen and Fjelde, 2013). At the same time, Berton and Panel (2017) argue that selectorates in authoritarian regimes are more likely to choose older leaders than in democracies, anticipating that these leaders will stay in office for life and thus leadership succession will occur sooner (opening more chances for other ambitious politicians). The Soviet Union’s leadership succession in the 1980s preceding the rise of Gorbachev could be seen as a good example of this logic.

Summing up, there are substantial doubts about the “far-sighted” and “patient” nature of policies implemented by authoritarian regimes. While their leaders are free from pressures of electoral cycles, they rarely have incentives to stick to particular policies over a long period of time. Even if long-term policies are in their interests, it is not clear whether these policies will achieve the desired effect (because of the mistrust of their subjects). And in some cases, the time horizon of autocrats is actually rather short, because of general instability of the regime or because of old age.

AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It remains to summarize the main results of my discussion. There are several key stylized facts about the temporal dynamics in authoritarian regimes presented in this chapter. First, autocracies differ depending on whether their institutions and governance practices are self-enforcing or self-destroying (Greif and Laitin, 2004). Self-enforcing institutions can survive for a long period of time; unstable institutional configurations of authoritarian rule will disappear (leading either to the regime collapse or to a transformation into a stable institutional configuration). Second, however, in addition to the fundamental dynamics towards the establishment of “equilibrium” institutions, authoritarian systems experience cycles of strength and weakness; the shape of these cycles can be determined by specific institutions existing in authoritarian regimes (elections combined with patronal presidencies), but they are also endogenous to how authoritarian leaders make decisions (dynastic cycles). Third, even the most stable regimes regularly face the major challenge of the leadership succession. The deaths or resignations of leaders constitute a natural point of increasing uncertainty and change in the evolution of authoritarian polities.

This summary stresses substantial gaps in our knowledge of the temporal dynamics of authoritarian regimes. First, with the exception of the models of political cycles, no systematic analyses of the typical paths of evolution of authoritarian regime over time exist. It is not clear, in particular, whether cyclical dynamics correctly describes the internal transformation of authoritarian regimes, or whether other paths of their evolution over time are possible. Second, as already mentioned, it is not clear how authoritarian regimes transition from one equilibrium state to another: which sequence of steps do they follow (and how do these steps affect the final outcome)? Third, many studies of authoritarian dynamics assume leaders who optimize their strategy given expectations about the future actions of their opponents. In reality, however, decisions of autocrats are often short-sighted and based on imperfect information and erroneous assessments. Treisman (2020) shows that many authoritarian regimes collapse because their leaders make mistakes: how do these mistakes influence authoritarian dynamics? Volpi and Gerschewski (2020), similarly, call for analytically distinguishing the pre-crisis and the within-crisis dynamics of authoritarian regimes, with the latter driven by “the contingencies created by the crisis itself.” Fourth, and related to that, what is the time

horizon authoritarian leaders are actually willing to use while planning their decisions? Are they indeed strategizing for a “thousand-year-rule” or for a quick period of rent-seeking and personal enrichment? And how do their subjects perceive the longevity of autocrats? Fifth, how do the dynamics of authoritarian regimes differ depending on their type? Systematic work in this respect has been done regarding the reaction of authoritarian regimes to the succession crises, but for other aspects of dynamics of authoritarian regimes (e.g., political cycles), comparative evidence across different types of autocracies is still limited.

In many cases, the conceptual language is lacking for analyzing the subtle changes in authoritarian regimes, beyond their collapse or democratization. Which typical power constellations exist in autocracies (besides the rather crude distinction of the “collective” and “personal” rule), how can we map them, how stable are they, and how do they evolve over time? Political scientists, historical sociologists, and historians have amassed a substantial body of descriptive evidence on the power dynamics in individual autocracies, yet is it possible to generalize this case-by-case evidence into a consistent theory? How accurate are the accounts of the power shifts in the authoritarian regimes, given their secretive nature? Which tools can we use to identify and to observe these dynamics besides case studies? Keller (2016) shows that network analysis can be used for this purpose; yet much more work is needed in this direction.

Another interesting question concerns the relation between the short-term and the long-term temporal dynamics in autocracies. On the one hand, the personalized nature of authoritarian regimes, their dependence on informal ties and personal coalitions, leads to substantial fluctuations in their power structures and policies in the short run (Baturu and Elkink, 2016). On the other hand, however, a large body of research on historical legacies shows enormous persistence of norms and practices underlying the authoritarian rule; they survive throughout various conflicts, regime changes, wars, and revolutions, leading to the reproduction of autocracy over centuries (Simpser et al., 2018; Libman and Obydenkova, 2021). How do these long-term, path-dependent features of societies shape the short-term power fluctuations (e.g., the way political contestation occurs)? And can the short-term dynamics affect the long-term trends? More research on this topic would be important.

Studying the temporal dimension of authoritarian rule constitutes an extremely promising avenue of research, able to enrich our knowledge about authoritarian regimes. It will allow us to move away from perceiving authoritarian regimes as the colossus of Ozymandias—either as a powerful Leviathan or as the feet of clay doomed to collapse. There is a multitude of changes and transitions occurring in authoritarian regimes, which have yet to be mapped and investigated.

NOTES

1. Some authoritarian regimes, like the Soviet and the Nazi ones, proclaim their eternal rule based on a sort of millenialist ideology (Redles, 2011; Slezkine, 2017). Others (e.g., hereditary

- monarchies) refer to century-old tradition as justification for their existence. Sometimes, however, authoritarian regimes (e.g., military juntas) present themselves as temporary (established to deal with specific crises).
2. The studies of the class described in this section explicitly refer to them as modeling “dynamics” of authoritarian rule. The notion of dynamics primarily refers to leaders making decisions, taking into account both contemporary and future outcomes (also determining the leaders, who are going to succeed them in future periods).
 3. Zeng (2020) suggests that appointing a successor reduces the risks associated with elections for authoritarian regimes with rulers preparing to leave office; however, there are cases when this strategy does not work (Hale, 2006).
 4. Quinn and Woolley (2001) offer a counter-argument to this thesis, suggesting that, since voters are risk-averse, democratic politicians will also avoid risk and implement more stable policies.

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CHAPTER 4

TIME AND REGIME CHANGE

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CHARACTERIZING and explaining changes between regimes—comprising the questions of why and how the established systems that guide activity develop over time—represents a rather large and important research agenda across many disciplines in social science. A political regime refers to a set of institutions that create and enforce laws, which mediates between the economic and social realms. Though traditionally associated with formal mechanisms of government, regimes can also pertain to informal rules and norms, such as interpersonal trust. In political science, regime change represents the breakdown of an existing set of political institutions and the installation of a new one. The concept of regime change is inherently dynamic and intimately connected to the notions of process and time, connoting the replacement of one state by another.

A considerable amount of research in political science is devoted to analyzing and anticipating changes between regimes and institutions over time. It is not a unified topic; beyond having different conceptions of how to define regimes and which institutions matter, scholars have approached the question of time and regime change with different empirical goals and specified their relationship to time in various ways. I briefly summarize the ways in which time has featured in the study of regime change in political science by dividing it into general features that scholars have aimed to understand and focusing on one dominant area of research.

My focus primarily concerns changes between and away from different forms of authoritarian regimes, highlighting institutional features that help to explain the survival of nondemocracies and subsequent transitions. After discussing the ways in which institutions extend the life of autocratic regimes, I argue that scholars have paid insufficient attention to the historical impacts of legislatures on regime change. To that end, this study represents one way to build on the study of time and regime change, which involves focusing on the temporal dynamics of legislatures in nondemocratic regimes. Some of the contributions include providing a brief overview of how scholars have described temporal processes involving regime change and elaborating on a specific area—that of authoritarian institutions and regime survival.

The analysis touches on several different aspects of time and regime change, including history, the order and duration of political institutions, and time-varying factors that affect the likelihood of regime change. It encourages thinking about the independent effects of institutions in light of differences in organizational structure and political actors. The insight touched on here is that, because of the structure of the legislature—which entails individuals engaging in face-to-face negotiation over policy and benefits, and which promotes horizontal accountability between members—scholars should consider how legislatures may have independently affected the probability of regime change as a result of the type of regime opposition. This insight is intimated in arguments about “contestation-first” sequences of democratization, “limited-access orders,” and “pacted” transitions (Dahl, 1971; North et al., 2009a; O’Donnell et al., 1986).

CHARACTERIZING TIME AND REGIME CHANGE

The ways in which the relationship between time and regime change has been addressed in political science can be divided into the basic elements of storytelling—who, what, when, where, why, and how? Organizing them in this way helps to tie together a diverse range of work on the subject and provides one schema for understanding how they fit together. First, scholars have approached the *what* question by describing patterns of regime change over time. The emergence of democratic regimes, in which a substantial portion of citizens directly or indirectly choose between politicians, is relatively new but has rapidly expanded in the last several hundred years. Scholars disagree, however, about what regime change has looked like over time.

One long-standing contention is that transitions to and from democracy are clustered in time and that the share of democracies in the world has followed a wave-like pattern (Doorenspleet, 2000; Strand et al., 2012; Huntington, 1991a, 1991b; Kurzman, 1998). Huntington (1991a, 1991b) argued that democratization historically occurred in three “waves”; the first wave began in the nineteenth century and lasted until the 1920s. The second wave was much briefer and followed the end of World War II, while the third wave persisted from the mid-1970s until the end of the Cold War. The observation of countries that were holding elections and initiating reforms in the 1990s led to considerable speculation over whether countries were democratizing or exhibiting a new form of authoritarianism, referenced by terms such as “illiberal democracy” and “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way, 2002, 2010; Schedler, 2002). Subsequent analyses of democratization trends have raised the prospect of additional waves (Diamond, 2011; McFaul, 2002), and the empirical pattern has undergone criticism and debate (Doorenspleet, 2000; Strand et al., 2012). Other characterizations of global regime change described transitions to democracy as a standard pattern in which elites

historically had the power to set the terms of competition and then later expanded the scope of participation (Dahl, 1971; Huntington, 1968; North et al., 2009a, 2009b).

The study of regime change and time has also explored the question of *who* is at a greater risk of regime change. Military dictatorships, for example, are more vulnerable to division over the dual tasks of controlling government and ensuring national security. To avoid risking a split in ranks, its leadership is more inclined to return to the barracks, for which they tend to be shorter-lived (Geddes, 1999, 2003). Others have pointed out the recurring threat of intervention by the armed forces in countries with a prior history of military governments, which partly accounts for the instability of presidential democracies relative to parliamentary regimes (Cheibub, 2006; Londregan and Poole, 1990; Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán, 2014). Shared institutional histories and conditions between countries within the same region also informs *where* regime change has occurred over time, speaking to the reemergence of dictatorship in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s (Valenzuela, 2004), electoral reforms in eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union (Bunce, 2003; Epperly, 2011; Grzymala-Busse, 2002), and postcolonial outcomes in Africa (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994, 1997). Likewise, differences in the timing of democratization have been explained as the product of “diffusion” among regional neighbors (Brinks and Coppedge, 2006; Bunce and Wolchik, 2006; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006).

Another subset of research on the topic elucidates on *how* regime change unfolds by examining the internal dynamics and processes by which it has occurred. The uncertainty surrounding a transition affects the willingness of elites to support liberalization, which can be moderated by negotiated pacts and actors’ expectations of the future (Debs, 2016; Karl, 1990; O’Donnell et al., 1986; Stradiotto and Guo, 2010). To this end, scholars have debated the merits of promoting democratization as a sequence of particular events or through a series of gradual reforms (Berman, 2007; Carothers, 2007; Mansfield and Snyder, 2007). A quick break from the previous regime afforded by rapidly transitioning may be beneficial because it does not allow the prior elites to control the process and does not require the accommodation of authoritarian interests (Bunce, 2003; Munck and Leff, 1997; Share, 1987). One view emphasizes the impact of the process of regime change on future outcomes by portraying it as subject to *critical junctures* and *path dependence*—decision points that restrict the range of possible choices and make certain events more likely (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007; Collier and Collier, 1991; Mahoney, 2001a, 2001b; Pierson, 2000). Insofar as the path of choices that actors take can have lasting effects on future outcomes, “out-of-sequence” or “ill-timed” transitions may be detrimental.

A somewhat larger body of work examines the potential causes of regime change, both direct or indirect, whose effects are often time-dependent. A variety of factors have been put forward to explain *why* regime change occurs, which are divisible along two dimensions: external versus internal factors and historical versus contemporaneous factors. External historical factors include legacies created by geography and colonial history (Acemoglu, 2001; Møller, 2015; Pop-Eleches, 2007), while internal historical factors pertain to legacies left by previous social, institutional, and economic

arrangements (Crawford and Lijphart, 1995; Epperly, 2011; Hicken and Kuhonta, 2011; Pop-Eleches, 2007). Both give weight to the “long shadow of the past,” which exerts a persistent influence on the likelihood of political stability over time.

Contemporaneous internal factors relate to present-day domestic features that shape the prospects for development and regime change. Within this, one major theme holds that the order of state-building explains regime stability; scholars have long underscored the consequences of administrative capacity and property rights for the development of modern governments (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Besley and Persson, 2009; D’Arcy and Nistotskaya, 2017; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Fukuyama, 2012, 2014; North, 1981, 1990; Tilly, 1978). Another major theme is the importance of economic factors, which generally concludes that economic development does not make democratization more likely but enhances the stability of democracies once they have emerged (Boix and Stokes, 2003; Lipset, 1959; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997; Przeworski et al., 2000; Wucherpfennig and Deutsch, 2009), and that natural resource extraction is positively associated with the survival of authoritarian regimes and diminishes the prospects for successful democratization (Ross, 2001, 2004; Smith, 2004; Ulfelder, 2007). Other major themes on the time-variant determinants of regime change include social movements and conflict (Carey, 2006; Hale, 2013; Hegre et al., 2001; Hoover and Kowalewski, 1992) and the timing of elections (Brancati and Snyder, 2012; Joshi et al., 2017; Reich, 2001), which stress the relationship between protest and repression and the tenuous effects of early elections. Contemporaneous external explanations point to democracy promotion effects and exogenous shocks as potential causes of regime change over time (Beaulieu and Hyde, 2008; Gasiorowski, 1995; Teorell, 2010).

Finally, the question of *when* regime change is likely to occur has become increasingly relevant as scholars develop more sophisticated models to explain it. One example is efforts to develop predictive models of regime change (Schrodt and Gerner, 2000). Formal models of regime change, which offer abstract theories about the sequence of choices between actors, can also be included in this group of research (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003). Contrasting the competing demands of a small number of actors—as the rich versus the poor or elites versus masses—they show that higher levels of inequality increase demands for redistribution but equip elites to resist it, and that democratization is the most likely outcome when its proponents are able to credibly threaten powerholders beyond their repressive capacity. Elsewhere, a number of studies use survival analysis methods to model the “risk” of regime change as a function of time (Alemán and Yang, 2011; Gasiorowski, 1995; Gates et al., 2006; Hegre et al., 2001; Stradiotto and Guo, 2010). Scholars aim to better explain when and how democracies become consolidated against failure as well how autocratic regimes manage to resist pressures for regime change (Diamond, 1999; Przeworski et al., 2000; Svoblik, 2008, 2014; Ulfelder, 2007). In both cases, evidence suggests that “institutionally consistent” regimes are less likely to fail (Gates et al., 2006; Gurr et al., 1990).

This summary provides but one way to organize the multitudinous research on political regime change, all of which is interlaced with the concepts of process and time.

Some of the broad insights encapsulated by this rich agenda include the observation that regime change has not been constant across history and geography; that the risk of failure is not the same for different types of regimes over time; that uncertainty shapes actors' expectations and transition outcomes often depend on elite actions; that a host of factors, both external and intrinsic to the regime, affect the likelihood that it fails over time; and that the duration of time changes the propensity for future regime change. More conjectural ideas about time and regime change concern whether certain types of legacies and internal factors matter more than others and whether "successful" development depends on an as-yet unknown sequence of factors. Nevertheless, discourse in this area is attractive because it may help to identify strategies for stabilizing post-conflict outcomes, promoting democratic governance, and anticipating patterns of institutional convergence and divergence.

Authoritarian Institutions and Regime Survival

Notwithstanding the areas in which research has elucidated time and regime change, there are plenty of ways that they can be improved on. One particular avenue concerns authoritarian institutions and the temporal context in which they occur. Scholars commonly differentiate between *types* of regimes, defining them by the set of institutions and practices on which they are based or the leaders that head them (Geddes, 2003; Geddes et al., 2014; Cheibub et al., 2010; Hadenius and Teorell, 2007). They assert that meaningful differences exist between governments run by a military officer or junta, as opposed to regimes ruled through hereditary succession or by political parties (Fjelde, 2010; Weeks, 2012; Wilson and Piazza, 2013; Wright, 2008). Different regime typologies and indices do not perfectly correspond to one another, but they share an interest in similar features (Coppedge et al., 2008; Wilson, 2014).

Extant scholarship on authoritarian institutions—distinguishable from democratic institutions by limits on contestation and participation—frequently cast them as the products of strategic choices by leaders. Scholars argue that autocrats adopt institutions such as parties and legislatures to safeguard their survival against domestic opposition. Parties and legislatures can help to reinforce dictatorship by distributing benefits and coordinating interests, co-opting actors and giving them a vested interest in the continuation of the regime (Gandhi, 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, 2007; Geddes, 2003; Magaloni, 2008). In doing so, they help to add credibility and legitimacy, enhance monitoring and information-gathering, and reinforce mechanisms of control (Boix and Svoblik, 2013; Magaloni, 2008; Svoblik, 2012). Similar arguments have been used to explain elections and courts in nondemocratic settings (Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009; Ginsburg and Moustafa, 2008; Solomon, 2007).

The argument that autocrats turn to parties and legislatures to safeguard against being removed from office obscures more nuanced dynamics, however, because the opposition that they face is rarely a monolithic actor. Such an argument assigns the

same instrumentality to different options, treating them as synonymous, largely contemporaneous institutions. Critics have challenged such “functionalist” interpretations for explaining the timing of institutions (Pepinsky, 2014). There are several reasons to be skeptical that parties and legislatures are equally likely to emerge in authoritarian regimes. For one, the personal rents provided by participation in an authoritarian legislature make it unlikely that elites would compete within parties to represent them in the legislative arena. Rather, where inequality is high and power is asymmetrically distributed, the small pool of contenders should result in the most powerful individuals participating as independent “candidates,” for whom elections may not be necessary (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005).

Only when a greater number of individuals can credibly threaten the regime should formalized mechanisms for selecting representatives and distributing resources in the form of elections and political parties become essential, emphasizing a “shared threat” faced by elites through the forced opening of a “limited-access” order (Brownlee, 2007; North et al., 2009a, 2009b; Slater, 2010; Smith, 2005). It is also worth pointing out that political parties, which are defined by groups of people that seek to influence politics by promoting representatives to office, vary considerably in their size, strength, and influence. Though parties may have existed in name in many Latin American countries in the nineteenth century, for example, scholars agree that politics was largely restricted to a small number of elites. In this sense, the Liberal Party that enabled the rise of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico bore little resemblance to the Institutional Revolutionary Party that followed him (Garner, 2001).

What is more, the two institutions have not strongly covaried over time. This is illustrated by Figure 4.1, which compares the proportion of countries that had a legislature to the average level of party system institutionalization in each country, as indicated by the strength and depth of political parties (Bizzarro et al., 2017; Coppedge et al., 2018). As early as 1848, more than half of all countries coded by the Varieties of Democracy Project had a legislature but party system institutionalization was considerably low. The extent to which legislatures were historically observable and distinct from party activity is not well known, however.

One reason that scholars of authoritarian institutions have not yet distinguished between parties and legislatures may be due to the fact that most regime-type datasets do not begin until after World War II. Examples are datasets created by Cheibub et al. (2010), Magaloni et al. (2013), and Geddes et al. (2014). In the postwar period nearly three-quarters or more of all countries had a legislature and truly closed autocracies were in the minority, making explaining transitions to electoral and party-based rule a more relevant goal for research on regime change. Notably, none of the aforementioned datasets account for legislatures in their categorization of regimes. An important question for those interested in explaining long-term patterns of regime change, however, is where authoritarian legislatures fit into the picture.

I argue that legislatures were observable prior to the introduction of political parties and elections not simply to legitimize the regime, but because power asymmetries did

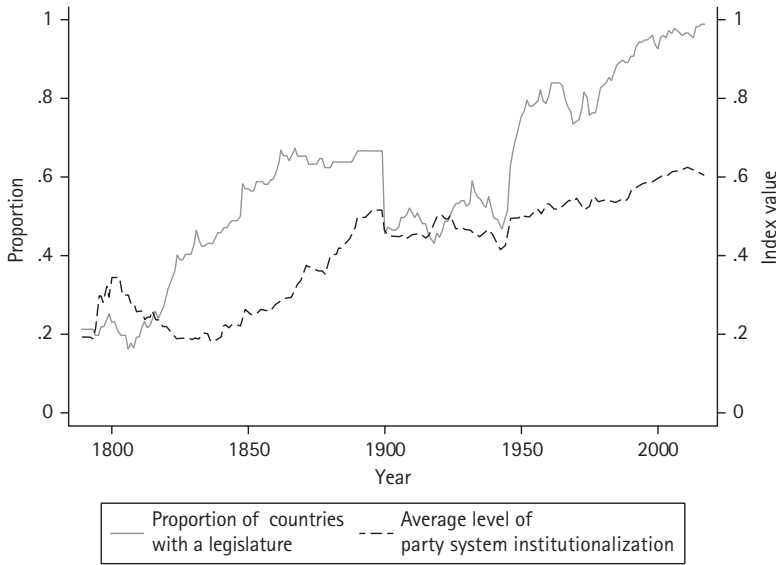


FIGURE 4.1: Trends in legislatures and party system institutionalization.

not necessitate the use of mass-based institutions to secure cooperation. As a forum for face-to-face interaction, the legislature—like cabinets and juntas—is an institution that can help to lower transaction costs, coordinate interests, and enhance monitoring. By promoting horizontal accountability among members, it adds credibility to agreements between elites, thereby helping to resolve the problem of “authoritarian power-sharing” (Svolik, 2012). In the past, the greatest challenge to rulers often came from the most powerful members of society, who were fewer in number relative to the larger population. To lessen uncertainty and resolve the coordination dilemmas between elites, institutionalizing their participation in government—or establishing direct links between patrons and clients—would have been a necessary component of state-building. To this end, legislatures could have provided an institutional basis for cooperation between elites that did not depend on parties and elections.

An outcrop of power-sharing arrangements between major powerbrokers, legislatures may have constituted a “stepping stone” between noninstitutionalized politics and the formation of additional political institutions such as political parties. As of yet, however, there is little research on the extent to which authoritarian legislatures were coterminous with parties and elections. One notable exception is Wright and Escribá-Folch (2012), who demonstrated that parties in authoritarian regimes increased the risk of a transition to democracy, while authoritarian legislatures decreased the risk of transition to another type of dictatorship. A valuable extension in the study of time and regime change, therefore, is to evaluate the independent impact of legislatures on nondemocratic transitions and to consider the role that they may have played in determining when regime change occurred in the past.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I test the notion that the timing of regime change differs depending on the presence of parties and legislatures in authoritarian regimes and compare between them. Like other formal political institutions, legislatures should help to add stability to nondemocratic regimes by co-opting opposition members, resolving coordination dilemmas, and enhancing the credibility of commitments made by the leader. On average, they should last longer than regimes that lack parties and legislatures. As a forum for horizontal accountability, authoritarian legislatures are particularly suited to reinforce coordination among elites as part of a “limited-access order” that excludes broader segments of society (North et al., 2009a). At the same time, they should also be less vulnerable to the demands for redistribution and inclusion that exert pressures to democratize, compared to more vertically oriented regimes that use parties and elections to maintain support (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003; Lindberg, 2013).

Two hypotheses follow from this argument: first, nondemocracies with legislatures should, on average, last longer than those without them. This is because autocratic legislatures help to secure the cooperation of potentially destabilizing actors, particularly elites. Second, they should be more durable than regimes that also include parties and elections; where political parties are more pervasive and active, the effect of authoritarian legislatures on regime survival should diminish because of a greater involvement of nonelites. These expectations underscore the relationship between political institutions that were formerly presumed to occur in tandem and the evolution of institutions and dilemmas that have produced regime change.

To shed light on the timing of legislatures and their relationship to regime change over time, I utilize data created by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project (Coppedge et al., 2018; Pemstein et al., 2018). The project is a collaborative effort involving many social scientists; surveying thousands of country experts, it uses measurement models to gauge the latent “score” for each question regarding many different aspects of democracy. The data are accessible in the form of a large dataset that comprises the period 1789–2017 for roughly 200 countries, enabling users to select from an assortment of components and compare them over time. In addition to providing broad coverage and highly disaggregated data, V-Dem thoroughly documents coding decisions and provides both point estimates and estimates of reliability for each indicator.

The primary relationship that I test is that between institutions and duration—how long each state lasted over time. To do so, I draw on the Regimes of the World (RoW) measure included in the dataset (Lührmann et al., 2018). The measure purports to classify regimes according to the extent of competitiveness and liberal principles; it distinguishes between *closed autocracy*, where there are no elections held to select the executive or the legislature, and *electoral autocracy*, in which multiparty elections occur but are either not free and fair or not truly competitive. In contrast, *electoral democracy* is defined by free and fair multiparty elections, while *liberal democracy* adds executive

oversight by the legislature and judiciary, rule of law, and the protection of liberties (Lührmann et al., 2018). The four “types” designated by the RoW measure are determined by a stepwise set of criteria based on the occurrence of elections, whether they are minimally fair and competitive, and additional liberal qualities (Coppedge et al., 2018; Lührmann et al., 2018).

As Lührmann et al. (2018) noted, the RoW categorization of democracy is a face-valid measure compared to other categorical measures of democracy; the number of observations coded as either electoral or liberal democracies denoted by the RoW measure corresponds to 99 percent and 98 percent of those coded as democracies by Boix et al. (2013) and Cheibub et al. (2010), respectively. It is also useful because it distinguishes regimes based on electoral practices, thereby separating nondemocratic regimes that permit elections to fill offices from those that do not. The measure is not strongly correlated with the designation of party-based authoritarian regimes—around half of single-party regimes identified by Geddes et al. (2014) and 72 percent of those indicated by Magaloni et al. (2013) fall into the category of closed autocracies. However, there is greater correspondence between observations that Magaloni et al. (2013) code as multiparty autocracies and electoral autocracies. The RoW measure is thus a better indicator of the use of parties and elections to manage competition in nondemocracies than of party-based rule.

The RoW measure applies absolute rather than relative standards regarding “free and fair elections” and “liberal principals,” which gives the impression of democracy as a relatively new phenomenon. As an example, the United States is coded as a closed autocracy between 1789 and 1795; it is also coded as an electoral autocracy until 1920, due to low scores on access to justice for women, and is not coded as a liberal democracy until 1969. Switzerland is coded as the first liberal democracy in 1849, followed by Australia in 1858 and Belgium and Denmark at the turn of the century. As a conservative estimator of “free and fair” elections RoW has the potential to understate the number of democracies in the world, but it nevertheless distinguishes countries based on multiparty elections. Like nearly every other indicator of authoritarian regime type, RoW does not denote the presence of a legislature. The omission is not an issue for electoral autocracies and democracies, as 96 percent or more observations covary, but only about half of all closed autocracies had a legislature.

Countries that did not hold multiparty elections to fill offices can be evenly split into those that governed with the help of a legislature and those that did not. Using information on legislative chambers, I therefore distinguished the presence of a legislature in each of the regime types. The sample consists of nearly 24,700 observations representing 196 countries between 1789 and 2017, of which autocracies make up 77 percent; 18 percent of the sample had multiparty elections and a legislature but were not free and fair—I refer to these as *institutionalized autocracies*. Of the 59 percent of observations that did not hold multiparty elections, just over half did not have a legislature. I refer to the other 28 percent of observations, which had a legislature but did not hold multiparty elections, as *legislative autocracies*. Less than one percent of observations were coded as regimes that had multiparty elections and no legislature—I refer to these as *electoral*

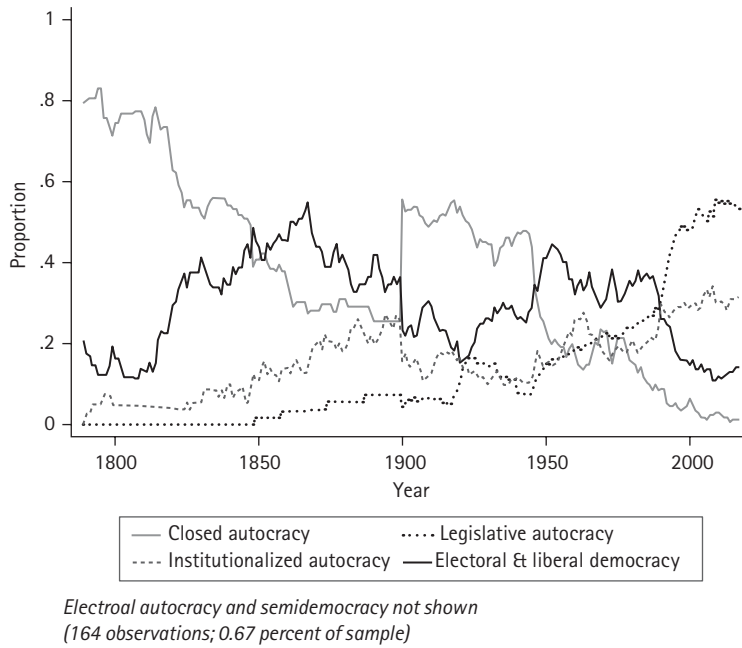


FIGURE 4.2: Proportion of institutional states over time.

autocracies (0.64 percent) and *semidemocracies* (0.03 percent)—while missing values between states make up about 4 percent of observations.

Figure 4.2 shows the prevalence of each regime type between 1789 and 2017 as a proportion of the sample. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the bulk of countries in the world either did not have multiparty elections or legislatures or eschewed the use of competitive elections to fill offices. In the latter half of both centuries, the most common type of regime was one in which multiparty elections were not held but a legislature existed. Not until the late-1980s did the proportion of countries that held multiparty elections surpass those that did not. Figure 4.3 depicts institutional changes by stacking the institutional trajectory of each country on top of one another, such that each line represents the pattern of one country in the sample. As the figure illustrates, almost all transitions from closed autocracy to multiparty elections involved a period of legislative autocracy. A visual inspection of the figure also suggests that closed and legislative autocracies tended to last longer than those that also held multiparty elections. This observation supports the notion that limited-access orders or elite pacts constituted an important step to more competitive institutional settings, in line with depictions of “contestation-first” patterns of political development (Dahl, 1971; Huntington, 1968; North et al., 2009a, 2009b; O’Donnell et al., 1986).

Distinguishing between regimes based on multiparty elections and legislatures enables me to test the independent effects of legislatures in contexts that lack competition between parties. It is, however, a poor proxy for party-based regimes that do not allow multiparty competition. To separate out the impact of authoritarian legislatures

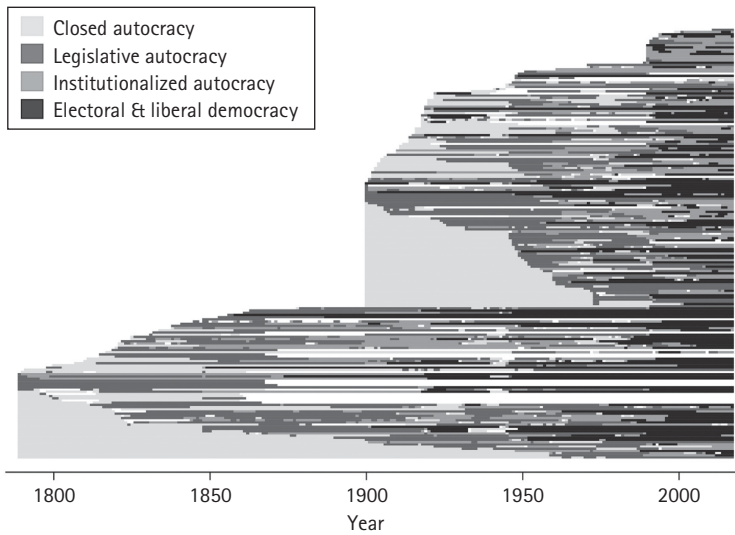


FIGURE 4.3: Sequence index plot of institutional states over time.

in regimes in which a ruling party helps to moderate threats to the regime, I include the party institutionalization index created by V-Dem, which combines information on the extent to which parties are organized, cohesive, and connected to civil society (Bizzarro et al., 2017; Coppedge et al., 2018). Many well-known one-party states, such as the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico or the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) in Botswana, score high on the party institutionalization index. Furthermore, it is not strongly correlated with the effective number of cabinet parties, nor with the degree of national party control. I expect that greater party system institutionalization—which is indicated by the index—increases the risk of regime failure in legislative autocracies. In robustness tests, I compare the effects of replacing the measure of party institutionalization with measures of civil society participation and national party control to account for the bridge that political parties serve to greater citizen involvement and the ability of one party to maintain power in the face of it. Given the rather strong correlation between electoral democracy and party system institutionalization, I also compare the effect of adding the electoral democracy index to the model.

The survival of regimes can be explained by a number of factors that are not related to the institutions in place. I therefore consider several different features as possible control variables. To account for the potential impact of wealth and population pressures on regime change, I included values of per capita GDP and population originally provided by Gleditsch (2002). Fariss et al. (2017) corrected and imputed the estimates to mitigate measurement error and biases due to sample selection. I also included a measure of a country's oil reserves as a control for the effect of natural resource wealth on regime survival (Ross 2001). I denoted the occurrence of civil wars, which have the capacity to destabilize regimes, by including a dummy for internal domestic conflicts that reached a threshold of 1,000 or more battle deaths each year. The estimates for both oil reserves

and civil war were coded by Haber and Menaldo (2011) and provided by the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al., 2018; Pemstein et al., 2018).

The probability of regime change may be influenced by prior instability and historical institutional legacies, as well as changing environmental conditions. As such, I included a count of the number of prior regime changes observed in each country and controlled for the year. I also considered neighborhood and diffusion effects by controlling for the region of the world; specifically, I indicated regional pressures to democratize by including the average level of democracy in each region, as measured by V-Dem's electoral democracy index (Coppedge et al., 2018; Pemstein et al., 2018; Teorell et al., 2016). Using the stepwise selection procedure recommended by Hosmer et al. (2008), I compared the impacts of each covariate on model fit and show the results of the best-fitting model. In robustness checks, I compared models with country- and year-fixed effects to mitigate the potential for omitted-variable bias by controlling for unit-specific attributes.

I focus on the time to regime change—the effect of institutions on the duration of regimes—as opposed to how the timing of factors affects the type of regime that follows or the order in which regimes change over time. The dependent variable is a count of the number of years that each state persisted, with regime failure denoted by a change in state. Using event history analysis—also called duration or survival analysis—I compare the hazards of regime change, or the survival rates of regimes, based on the counts of how long each set of institutions lasted. Figure 4.4 shows the estimated survival rates for each of the regime types. For simplicity, I omitted the few observations of multi-party autocracy and democracy that were coded as not having a legislature. According to the figure, democracies are the longest lasting, while closed autocracies and legislative

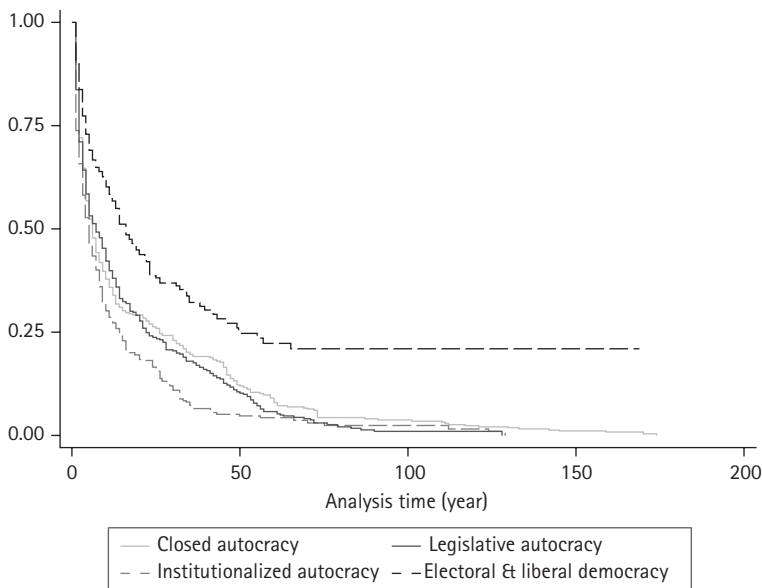


FIGURE 4.4: Survival estimates, by institutional state.

autocracies appear to have roughly similar survival rates. Compared to them, institutionalized autocracies have shorter survival times. A log-rank test for the equality of survivor functions, in addition to signed-rank tests for pairs of regime types, confirms that the risks of failure differ across each institutional state.

As is true of all statistical models, model choice depends on assumptions about the nature of the data. One assumption is that the time in which failures occur is continuous, such that the timing of almost all failures is unique. Although the data that I use occur in yearly intervals, I treat regime duration as continuous and compare the results to discrete-time models as a robustness check. Many models, such as the Cox proportional hazards model, assume that the effect of a covariate on the likelihood of failure is multiplicative, or constant across time. Testing the proportional-hazards assumption indicates that this has been violated. As a result, I estimate a parametric model that specifies a distribution for the baseline hazard function but allows survival times to accelerate or decelerate. Comparing the fit of different parametric models suggests that the log-normal distribution best characterizes the shape of the survivor function. Although censoring—the loss of participants or conclusion of observation before all spells have been completed—sometimes presents an issue, parametric approaches are able to incorporate information from censored observations. I nevertheless compare models with and without right-censored spells as a robustness test. In the following section, I describe the results.

RESULTS

The initial sample included 1,714 regime spells between 1789 and 2016. In unrestricted models that did not include other covariates, the results suggested that closed autocracies were not differentiable from legislative autocracies but that autocracies with legislatures and multiparty elections had significantly higher hazards of failure. Among the 265 failures that transitioned to democracy, closed autocracies had significantly lower hazards and institutionalized autocracies significantly higher hazards of failure than legislative autocracies. In contrast, closed autocracies were not more or less likely to fail to another form of autocracy than legislative autocracies, while institutionalized autocracies showed significantly lower hazards of failure.

Comparing the effect of adding and removing individual covariates from the model as a diagnostic for determining the appropriate specification indicates that five control variables have the biggest impact on the model: per capita GDP, civil war, geographic region, regional levels of democracy, and the number of previous transitions. Due to listwise deletion from missing values in the control variables, however, the resulting sample includes roughly 13,000 observations that correspond to 1,200 regime spells over 161 countries between 1816 and 2006. This specification makes a dramatic improvement on model fit despite its impact on the size of the sample and the degrees of freedom. These results are shown in Table 4.1; models 1 and 2 compare all failures, with and

Table 4.1: Duration Model Estimating Survival Times, with Log-Normal Distributed Hazards

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	All transitions	All transitions	Dem. transitions	Nondem. transitions
Closed autocracies	−0.497 (0.112)***	−0.750 (0.184)**	7.417 (452.033)	−0.811 (0.182)***
Legislative autocracies	<i>(reference category)</i>			
Electoral autocracies	−1.590 (0.139)***	−1.589 (0.159)***	6.578 (478.788)	−1.766 (0.156)***
Institutionalized autocracies	−0.141 (0.098)	−0.089 (0.105)	−2.141 (0.400)***	0.235 (0.106)**
Semidemocracies	−1.398 (0.558)**	−1.371 (0.577)**	−0.889 (1.281)	−2.015 (0.601)***
Electoral democracies	0.672 (0.156)***	0.719 (0.170)***	0.760 (0.498)	0.501 (0.179)***
Liberal democracies	2.740 (0.281)***	2.871 (0.303)***	4.635 (0.745)***	2.015 (0.353)***
Missing values	−0.702 (0.319)**	−0.622 (0.520)	6.937 (1789.858)	−0.308 (0.502)
Geographical region	<i>(omitted for space)</i>			
number of previous states	−0.017 (0.007)**	−0.016 (0.008)**	−0.085 (0.022)***	−0.014 (0.008)*
Regional democracy	−0.483 (0.374)	−0.185 (0.424)	−4.941 (1.093)***	1.367 (0.453)***
GDP p.c. (real, 1996 values)	−0.056 (0.058)	−0.012 (0.065)	−0.730 (0.211)***	0.189 (0.067)***
Civil war	−0.147 (0.116)	−0.154 (0.133)	0.661 (0.513)	−0.321 (0.133)**
Party system institutionalization		−0.502 (0.215)**	−5.320 (0.766)***	0.293 (0.222)
Intercept	2.434 (0.475)***	2.271 (0.525)***	16.540 (1.892)***	0.155 (0.544)
ln(sigma)	0.175	0.206	0.612	0.179
Subjects	1195	1035	1035	1035
N	12842	10894	10894	10894
Log-likelihood	−1710.6	−1401.3	−401.6	−1183.1

Standard errors in parentheses.

$p < 0.01$ *** ;

$p < 0.05$ ** ;

$p < 0.10$ *

without the addition of party system institutionalization, while models 3 and 4 respectively differentiate between failures to democracy and nondemocracy.

According to model 1, closed autocracies have significantly higher risks of failure than legislative autocracies, while institutionalized autocracies are not statistically differentiable. Accounting for party system institutionalization sharpens the distinction between legislative autocracies and closed autocracies, while reducing the difference between legislative and institutionalized autocracies (model 2). This observation confirms the value of accounting for party control in autocratic environments, which increases the hazards of regime failure. There is little evidence to suggest that any of the covariates exert a statistically significant impact on the timing of all types of regime change, with the exception of the number of previous failures.

Among transitions to democracy, as shown in model 3, autocracies with legislatures and multiparty elections are at a significantly higher risk of failure than legislative autocracies. The hazards of democratizing show differences by region; more importantly, perhaps, the average level of democracy in the region exerts one of the largest impacts on the time to failure that resulted in a democracy. Greater party system institutionalization strongly increases the risk of a transition to democracy, an effect that holds despite controlling for the level of electoral democracy. Higher levels of per capita GDP also increase the risk of a transition to democracy, as does a greater number of previous transitions.

Model 4 shows that for regime failures that were followed by autocracy, closed autocracies have a significantly higher risk of failure and institutionalized autocracies have a significantly lower risk of failure than legislative autocracies. Both electoral and liberal democracies, by contrast, are significantly associated with lower hazards of transitioning to autocracy, the estimates for which differ considerably between them. There is little evidence to suggest that there are regional differences in the failure rate to autocracy, although the average level of democracy in the region significantly decreases the risk of failure. Higher income also makes failure to autocracy less likely, while civil war increases the hazards of regime failure followed by an autocratic regime. Party system institutionalization does not seem to significantly impact the risk of regime failure followed by an authoritarian regime.

Using different techniques for determining model fit based on residuals, or the differences between predicted and observed duration of spells, suggests that the model is appropriately specified and that it is not strongly influenced by particular observations. A plot of the Cox-Snell residuals shows a fairly straight line with a slope equal to one, which worsens when I remove or add controls to the model. Plotting the score residuals shows variation in influence, with a few observations exerting a disproportionate amount; the results do not change, however, if I omit more influential observations. Based on martingale residuals, each covariate appears to be in their appropriate functional forms. Comparing models with and without robust standard errors also provides support against model misspecification (King and Roberts, 2015).

I obtain similar results when I estimate the models as discrete-time survival models, as well as when I omit right-censored spells. Likewise, the results are similar when I

include fixed effects or include year trends. The directional relationships between closed, legislative, and institutionalized autocracies are also the same when I estimate failures to democracy and autocracy as competing risks. Recognizing that some leaders rule with smaller support coalitions and that personalism is a distinguishing trait of many regimes, I ran the same models estimating the length of time that executives remained in office. I found similar relationships, with two exceptions: GDP no longer has a significant impact on the hazard of failure, and both closed and institutionalized autocracies show higher hazards of failure resulting in autocracy than legislative autocracies. Thus, compared to autocracies with neither institution or to those that also rely on multiparty elections, legislatures in autocracies appear to last longer and also to support the longevity of authoritarian leaders.

When I replace the measure of party system institutionalization with an index of civil society participation, the results are similar. However, including an interaction between the two suggests that party system institutionalization in environments with a weak civil society significantly lower the hazards of failure, and that the combined effect of party system institutionalization and civil society participation strongly increases the risk of regime failure. In contrast, a high level of national party control lowers the risk of failure, the effect of which is reinforced by a more institutionalized party system. Notably, they work in different ways—civil society participation in more institutionalized party systems lowers the risk of failure to a democracy, while national party control in more institutionalized party systems lowers the risk of failure to an autocracy.

DISCUSSION

Figures 4.5a and 4.5b, respectively, display the estimated cumulative hazards of transitioning to democracy or autocracy by regime type. Compared to closed autocracies and legislative autocracies, the timing of transitions to a democracy were much shorter for those that also held multiparty elections. Conversely, closed autocracies that transitioned to another form of autocracy had shorter life spans than either legislative autocracies or regimes that had legislatures and multiparty elections. Nondemocratic regimes characterized by a legislature but not competitive elections between parties seem to occupy the middle ground between the two risks. Though this may be attributable to the potentially destabilizing impact of holding competitive elections—even if they are rigged in favor of the incumbent—the difference between regimes rests in part on the existence and strength of a political party. This is made apparent by controlling for party system institutionalization, in which case the difference in risks between legislative and institutionalized authoritarian regimes diminishes and the difference between legislative and closed autocracies is sharpened by a similar degree.

The level of party entrenchment thus seems to explain a lot of the difference between competitive authoritarian regimes and those with legislatures. Accounting for party system development also makes it clear that legislatures independently promote

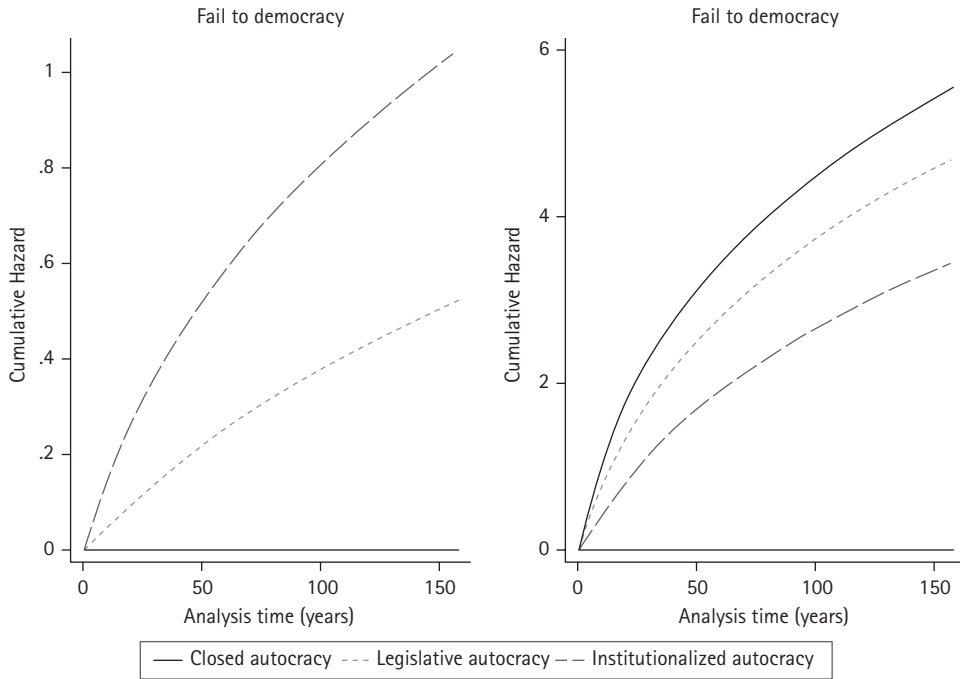


FIGURE 4.5: Cumulative hazards of regime failure, by failure type.

the longevity of authoritarian regimes. This finding is in line with that of Wright and Escribá-Folch (2012), who concluded that parties in authoritarian regimes make a transition to democracy more likely and that legislatures help to decrease the risk of a transition to another form of nondemocracy. Thus, an important takeaway is that legislatures may have an independent effect on the timing of authoritarian regime survival, which I argue depends on the type of opposition and the institutions that arise to accommodate them.

The additional covariates that best explain the timing of regime change and contribute to a better fitting model also provide valuable insights that speak to extant research on the topic. For one, the number of previous states is robustly associated with shorter survival times. Whether couched in discussions of the well-known “coup trap,” the perils of off-path institutional trajectories, or conflict recurrence, countries that had a history of more numerous institutional changes tended to be shorter lived. Civil war, in particular, increased the hazards that a country failed in a given year and was replaced by an autocratic regime. The democraticness of a country’s neighbors—represented by the average level of democracy in each region—was strongly associated with shorter survival times for transitions to democracy and longer survival times for failures to autocracy. This finding gives some validation to arguments that democracy has geographical diffusion effects and that a country’s neighbors matter. Additionally, separating transitions to democracy from those to autocracy implies that higher income levels increase the risks of transitioning to a democracy and decrease the likelihood of being replaced by an

autocracy. Though they do not resolve the issue of endogeneity between democratization and wealth, the results point to a beneficial effect of income. The ancillary findings highlight a handful of factors that, along with political institutions, interact with time to produce an impact on regime change.

The empirical models of regime change presented here are quite simple. On the one hand, I interchanged other covariates such as natural resource wealth and population to identify the most parsimonious and best-fitting model. On the other hand, data limitations stemming from missing values required judiciousness to preserve as many episodes as possible. Evaluating the strength of the relationships that I identified entailed trying different model specifications and testing some of their assumptions. One critical assumption is that the spells in the sample are independent, which I dealt with by controlling for prior transitions and including unit effects. An estimation approach that allows multiple failures to occur may be preferable. In addition to identifying other factors that affect regime change and exploring how well the findings travel across space and time, additional improvements include accounting for shared frailties between subjects in the sample and estimating multistate models. Notwithstanding potential corrections to more precisely detail the relationships, this demonstrates one way that time affects regime change.

Understanding the complex way in which time moderates the likelihood and aftereffects of regime change is supported by data and research that covers a broader period of time. Moreover, identifying the instrumental value of institutions in the past—and differentiating between them—can help to inform contemporary knowledge about regime dynamics that involve parties and legislatures in nondemocracies. Legislatures may not fulfill the same function now due to the increased presence of parties and to democracy promotion efforts, but historical patterns of regime change may be explainable by an approach that emphasizes their role in promoting horizontal accountability between elites. Focusing on differences between institutions based on horizontal versus vertical accountability could be useful for future work on the topic of regime change and postconflict governance.

CONCLUSION

Of the many ways that time impacts regime change, one is through political institutions—they help to resolve dilemmas associated with governance, making it more or less likely that a regime can successfully handle opposition and persist. The goal of the analysis presented here was to explicate this particular relationship between time and regime change by exploring the way in which institutions help to extend the life of nondemocratic regimes. The idea that autocrats benefit from features such as parties, legislatures, elections, and courts is not new, but constitutes a major area of work on authoritarian regimes (Brownlee, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Slater, 2010; Svobik, 2012). Though it is clear that such institutions differ from their democratic counterparts, a

less understood question within this research is how authoritarian institutions differ in terms of their ability to co-opt, coordinate, and sustain. An important but understudied distinction is legislatures and parties, which have different organizational structures and means of accommodating opposition. The main takeaways are that (1) legislatures and parties in autocracies do not serve the same purpose in democracies, (2) the functions of each institution may be different because of the way in which they support power-sharing and co-optation, and (3) the instrumental value of institutions and the successfulness of regimes may vary over time.

Expounding on the historical impacts of political institutions is important because it helps to disentangle their roles in less-democratic contexts from the role that they play in more institutionalized, democratic contexts. Furthermore, identifying the ways in which such institutions may have differed in sustaining nondemocratic regimes may help to distinguish between vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms that resolve common dilemmas. As I have argued, legislative autocracy is related to horizontal accountability and elite pacts that historically characterized state-building and patterns of regime change. This touches on the various elements invoked by scholars to explain regime change and underscores their relationship to time, including order, duration, and historical occurrence. It illustrates just one facet of the way in which time and regime change are interconnected, however. The study of regime change is almost wholly dependent on an understanding of process and time. Beyond this area of research, a variety of temporal aspects shape the political contexts that determine a large number of important outcomes (Grzymala-Busse, 2011; Pierson, 2000, 2004).

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CHAPTER 5

ENDOGENOUS AND EXOGENOUS ELECTION TIMING

PETRA SCHLEITER

POPULAR elections are a fundamental and constitutive aspect of democracy. They are the means by which voters select and empower incoming representatives. Simultaneously, they enable voters to hold their representatives to account and to reward or punish them for past performance. Democratic elections, in other words, are make-or-break moments for democratic politicians; they are the focus of the electoral ambitions of candidates and political parties, shape the work of incumbents, and influence the rhythm of policy cycles.

However, popular elections are not uniformly fixed and exogenous events in the democratic calendar. Many democracies give those same politicians whose fate may be decisively affected by the outcome of elections some influence over their timing. For instance, all but 7 out of 35 constitutions in postwar Europe enable incumbent governments to influence the timing of elections and 42 percent of all elections are held before the end of the maximum interelectoral term (Schleiter and Tavits, 2016).

Powers to threaten or call early elections are some of the most consequential prerogatives in a democracy. Parliamentary dissolution offers a means to refer crises and gridlock in government and the assembly to the electorate for resolution. This has fundamental importance in those democracies in which the government depends on assembly confidence: Dissolution in this context is the ultimate safety mechanism that makes it possible to address situations in which parliament cannot agree to form a government or to lend it the support to govern. At the same time, discretion to dissolve parliament can also be employed by politicians for partisan advantage. Leaders who are empowered to dissolve parliament may “call elections at the most advantageous time for them—when they expect to win” (Smith, 2004, 1), which gives rise to incumbency advantages and shapes electoral accountability (Kayser, 2005, 2006; Palmer and Whitten, 2000; Roy and Alcantara, 2012; Strøm and Swindle, 2002; Schleiter and

Tavits, 2016). Moreover, actors who have discretion to influence dissolution can ensure that parliamentary politics occur in the shadow of early elections. This has extensive implications for bargaining over the making and breaking of governments as well as public policy (Becher and Christiansen, 2015; Diermeier and Stevenson, 1999, 2000; Grofman and Roozendaal, 1994, 1997; Lupia and Strøm, 1995; Protsyk, 2005; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones, 2009; Shugart and Carey, 1992).

This chapter begins by defining exogenous and endogenous election timing, examines which institutional actors have power to influence election timing, explores the causes of early elections and discusses the heterogeneous nature of premature polls. It then turns to the consequences of different election timing rules for the management of gridlock and for a broad range of political outcomes including the incumbent's re-election chances, parliamentary bargaining, and policy cycles. The concluding section highlights a range of important but as yet unanswered questions in the field.

EXOGENOUS AND ENDOGENOUS ELECTION TIMING

The exogenous or endogenous scheduling of national elections is a matter of constitutional provisions. Election timing is *exogenous* when it cannot constitutionally be affected by political choice, while *endogenous* election timing is constitutionally amenable to political influence.¹ For instance, in the United States of America, the timing of congressional and presidential elections is constitutionally fixed and therefore independent of the choices of political actors.² In the overwhelming majority of parliamentary democracies, however, endogenous election timing is the rule because actors inside or outside government are constitutionally empowered to trigger a premature dissolution of parliament and early elections.³ Whenever this is the case, the scheduling of parliamentary elections, that is, whether an election is held early or at the end of the constitutional interelection period, is, to some extent, a political choice.

Whether a democracy gives political actors the scope to call early elections varies with the constitutional regime type. Endogenous election timing is permitted only in democracies in which the government depends on *assembly confidence*, that is, parliamentary and semipresidential systems, and applies exclusively to the *legislature*.⁴ This is consistent with the view that the power to dissolve the legislature is a counterweight to the executive's dependence on parliamentary confidence (Cox, 1987; Linz, 1994).⁵ Parliamentary dissolution, according to this account, is an essential gridlock resolution device designed to address crises of governability when the legislature is not able to form a government, keep it in power, or provide legislative support for its initiatives. In contrast, when the survival of the cabinet is independent of assembly confidence, as in presidential democracies, the legislature and the president serve constitutionally fixed terms.⁶

Among constitutions that permit early election calling, however, the level of discretion available to political actors in timing elections varies tremendously. While some parliamentary systems, such as Denmark, grant full discretion to the prime minister to call elections early, others severely constrain the circumstances under which early elections can be invoked. In Romania, for instance, parliament can only be dissolved in response to repeated failures to invest a government and not within the final six months of the president's term (Goplerud and Schleiter, 2016). Thus, in democracies that permit early elections, the extent to which election timing is flexible and dependent on political choices is a matter of degree.

As the definition offered here makes clear, endogenous election timing is a constitutional feature of the political system. Hence, under constitutions that permit early elections, *even the timing of regular elections*, that is, elections that are held at the end of the constitutionally defined parliamentary term, is not exogenous. The reason for this is that a decision by politicians to allow parliament (and the government) to complete the full interelectoral term is as much a political choice as calling an election early. Put differently, when politicians have discretion to call early elections, the choice to proceed to regular elections instead is not exogenous to political considerations and should not be treated as such.⁷

WHO HAS POWER TO INFLUENCE ELECTION TIMING?

The constitutional provisions that regulate parliamentary dissolution and early election calling may involve multiple actors, including the prime minister (PM), the government collectively (Bergman et al., 2003), the legislature (Fish and Kroenig, 2009), and the head of state (Metcalf, 2000; Shugart and Carey, 1992). These actors can be engaged in various capacities at different stages of the process and subject to a range of constraints (Strøm and Swindle, 2002; Goplerud and Schleiter, 2016).

Recent studies differ in their conceptualization and measurement of these actors' influence on the dissolution process. Strøm and Swindle (2002), for instance, distinguish between powerless actors, actors with prerogatives to veto parliamentary dissolution, and actors who can dissolve parliament unilaterally. The most comprehensive attempt to measure assembly dissolution powers constructs a 10-point scale that records each political actor's power to (1) initiate the dissolution process, (2) advance it, and (3) decide the early dissolution of parliament, taking account of the political and temporal constraints that constitutions may impose on the use of these powers (Goplerud and Schleiter, 2016). When a constitution foresees multiple paths to dissolution, as is often the case, the index focuses on the maximum score for each actor across any of the paths available to them.

Conceptually, this index captures the level of discretionary influence by different politicians on parliamentary dissolution. Table 5.1 summarizes the scores by actor and shows that, in cross-national comparison, prime ministers and governments collectively are the actors who most often have extensive discretion to dissolve parliament. In addition, however, presidents play an important (and, as we shall see, much less studied) role in parliamentary dissolutions. The legislature itself is involved in the overwhelming majority of dissolution processes, most often because some decision, omission, or dysfunction on its part—such as government dismissal, the failure to pass a budget, or inability to invest a government—is required to open the path to dissolution.

Table 5.1: Country Scores

Actor				
Country	PM	Government	Legislature	President
Australia	10.00		1.66	
Austria			7.00	10.00
Belgium (1831)		8.50		
Belgium (1995)		4.25	5.50	
Bulgaria (1990)			7.00	
Bulgaria (1991)			1.71	
Canada	10.00			
Croatia (2000)		2.13	5.50	2.61
Czech Republic (1992)			1.05	3.17
Czech Republic (2009)			2.44	3.17
Denmark	10.00			
Estonia		2.13	3.85	5.00
Finland (1919)				10.00
Finland (1991)	5.00			4.75
France (1946)		1.81	0.58	
France (1958)				9.03
Germany	2.50		1.75	5.00
Greece (1975)		2.13	1.84	9.50
Greece (1986)		4.25	3.50	2.50
Hungary (1989)			7.00	2.48
Hungary (2011)			7.00	4.74
Iceland				10.00
Ireland	10.00		0.88	5.00
Israel (1958)			7.00	
Israel (1996)	5.00		5.50	5.00
Israel (2003)	2.50		5.50	2.50
Italy				9.03

Table 5.1: Continued

Actor				
Country	PM	Government	Legislature	President
Japan		8.50		
Latvia				5.00
Lithuania		2.02	2.50	4.75
Luxembourg		8.50		
Macedonia			5.50	
Malta	5.00		0.69	5.00
Moldova			0.82	2.28
Netherlands		8.50		
New Zealand	10.00			
Norway				
Poland (1989)			4.00	5.23
Poland (1992)			4.00	5.23
Poland (1997)			4.00	4.75
Portugal (1976)			1.56	9.50
Portugal (1982)				8.10
Romania			0.58	2.02
Russia	2.13		1.31	4.25
Slovakia (1992)			0.69	2.38
Slovakia (1999)		2.02	1.02	3.09
Slovenia	5.00		2.75	
Spain	8.55		1.75	
Sweden (1809)		8.22		
Sweden (1971)	10.00			
Sweden (1975)		8.29	1.38	
Turkey (1982)	2.38		7.00	4.99
UK (1945)	10.00			
UK (2011)			4.00	
Ukraine (1996/2010)			0.83	2.38
Ukraine (2004)			0.91	2.61

Note: A blank cell indicates that the actor has a score of zero. All values are rounded to two decimal places.

Source: Goplerud and Schleiter (2016).

Fundamentally, greater discretion to dissolve gives rise to greater opportunities for a political actor to call or threaten an early election for political advantage. Constitutional constraints and checks on such discretion are typically intended to curb the opportunities to derive partisan gain from dissolution powers while preserving the option of early elections as a gridlock resolution device to address political crises. Broadly

speaking, constitutional constraints on early election calling are effective. The more limited the discretion of political actors to invoke early elections, the lower the frequency of early elections (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones, 2009; Schleiter and Tavits, 2016).

THE CAUSES OF EARLY ELECTIONS

Two literatures analyze the causes of election timing: The political economy literature on opportunistic election timing assumes that early elections in parliamentary democracies are timed for partisan advantage by self-interested incumbents to coincide with favorable circumstances (Balke, 1990; Baron, 1998; Kayser, 2005)—a strategy that is also known as “political surfing” (Ito, 1990; Kayser, 2005). Empirical work in this tradition provides extensive evidence that peaks in economic performance and popularity trigger early elections as incumbents strive to exploit advantageous conditions (Chowdhury, 1993; Ito and Park, 1988; Ito, 1990; Kayser, 2006; Palmer and Whitten, 2000).⁸

In contrast, theoretical work on government terminations highlights that popular parties with the power to call early elections do not necessarily do so. Instead they may choose to shore up the status quo government or form a replacement cabinet without intervening elections by using the threat of a parliamentary dissolution to extract concessions from other parties that fear electoral losses (Lupia and Strøm, 1995; Diermeier and Stevenson, 2000). According to these accounts, early election timing is driven not only by constitutional powers and popularity (i.e., favorable conditions) but also by the payoffs from these alternative choices. Unlike the literature on political surfing, these models also assume that the power to dissolve lies with a parliamentary majority, which implies that it can be used to topple the incumbent government. For instance, a popular minor coalition party governing with an unpopular but dominant partner may choose to join the opposition to trigger an early election that seals the fate of its former partner.

Both literatures make critical contributions to understanding the considerations that cause parties to time elections early but they also leave important gaps. Most notably, neither literature adequately captures the heterogeneous nature of early elections and their causes. For instance, the literature on opportunistic election timing describes early elections as instances of political surfing by self-interested incumbents. Yet, this description is not appropriate to the majority of early elections. As country-specific studies and comparative work documents, early polls are most often forced on incumbents by defeat and political failure (Hickson and Seldon, 2004; Bergman et al., 2003; Müller and Sieberer, 2014).⁹ That makes the lack of differentiation between the different types of early elections in most empirical studies of political surfing particularly problematic.

Empirical work on government terminations, too, is characterized by an unresolved struggle to address the underlying heterogeneity among early elections. Although several coding schemes for government terminations distinguish early elections that are voluntarily called by the government from elections triggered by conflict and

government failure (see, for instance, Warwick, 1994, 29; Strøm et al. 2003, 117–118), the corresponding empirical analyses have consistently failed to explore how the causes of these elections differ. King et al. (1990) first recognized the need to take account of this heterogeneity in empirical modeling, noting, “political systems generate two distinctly different types of observed durations. In the first and largest group are those cabinets that merely break apart due to some combination of critical events. The other group includes governments that come near the CIEP [(i.e., constitutional interelection period)] maximum [and] . . . dissolve . . . to seek electoral advantage, no doubt recognizing that the ‘end of the game’ is at hand” (King et al., 1990, 852–853). Instead of disaggregating and explicitly modeling these two types of elections, however, scholars have censored terminations in the second group of observations, treating them as if the true durations of these governments were unobserved on the grounds that had they not “come near the CIEP, this latter group of governments would probably have lasted longer” (King et al., 1990, 853; Warwick and Easton, 1992, share this approach). Yet, as Diermeier and Stevenson (2000, 635–636) note, the calling of an early election for partisan advantage—not only in the final year of the parliamentary term but also at any point of a cabinet’s term—is clearly a political form of government termination that demands an explanation as much as cabinet failure and collapse. In spite of this, scholars have continued to pool all early elections, modeling them as a single undifferentiated type of outcome. Thus, the heterogeneity of early elections presents significant challenges for both literatures.

THE HETEROGENEOUS NATURE OF EARLY ELECTIONS

For the purposes of understanding why early elections occur in reality, and what their consequences may be, it is useful to consider what is at stake in these elections. When an early election is called, the future of the incumbent hangs in the balance. Pundits, voters, and politicians agree that the main prize in such elections is the position of the dominant governing party, led by the prime minister. That party may use early elections to consolidate its position, or it can be the target of early elections called with the goal of weakening or removing it from office when its hold on power slips.¹⁰ This divides early elections into two distinct types (Schleiter and Issar, forthcoming; Schleiter and Tavits, 2016): The first of these is political surfing—a strategy by which the incumbent prime minister’s party, with or without coalition partner consent, makes use of favorable circumstances to raise its chances of re-election. Prime ministers have a central and privileged role in calling surfing elections because their constitutional prerogatives and their agenda-setting powers within government make them either the sole or the dominant actor in triggering parliamentary dissolutions for the purpose of political surfing. This first type of early election, then, can be defined as (1) triggered by the incumbent

prime minister (with or without coalition partner consent), (2) to capitalize on favorable circumstances such as public opinion support or opposition weakness (i.e., poor opposition poll ratings, divisions, leaderlessness, or opposition unpreparedness for an election) (Schleiter and Tavits, 2016, 840; Schleiter and Issar, forthcoming).¹¹

The second type of early election is directed against a dominant (or sole) governing party whose hold on political power has slipped through loss of political support or the collapse of its government. For the dominant governing party, this type of election is the result of political failure. Failure elections can be defined as triggered by the (1) loss of support for a government's legislative program, (2) loss of parliamentary confidence, (3) withdrawal of a minor coalition partner, or (4) forced resignation of the prime minister—or the imminent occurrence of any of these events (Schleiter and Tavits, 2016, 840; Schleiter and Issar, forthcoming). According to the extensive literature on government terminations, the choice to hold such elections may be precipitated by a broad range of events, including political scandals, economic downturns, policy failures, protests, international crises, and intra- or interparty conflicts (Browne et al., 1986; Lupia and Strøm, 1995). Unlike surfing elections, premature elections that arise from incumbent failure can be, and often are, initiated by actors other than the dominant governing party, including the parliamentary opposition, a president or a minor coalition partner.

Schleiter and Issar (forthcoming) offer a first empirical analysis of both types of elections and find that they have distinct, and to some extent diametrically opposed predictors. Thus, the probability of political surfing rises in a prime minister's constitutional discretion to call an election early, the elapsing parliamentary term (which reduces the opportunity cost that a prime minister incurs in terms of sacrificing the remaining term in office) and, conditionally on these two factors, in economic growth, but are unaffected by the existence of institutional or political veto players (i.e., bicameralism, minority government status, and parliamentary fragmentation). The probability of failure elections, in contrast, rises with the influence of institutional and political veto players, is reduced by economic growth, and remains unaffected by a prime minister's discretion to dissolve and the elapsing interelectoral term. These findings suggest that early elections are not a single homogeneous type of event.

CONSEQUENCES OF ENDOGENOUS ELECTION TIMING

A better and more nuanced understanding of the heterogeneity and causes of early elections is central to an appreciation of the consequences which fixed and flexible electoral terms have for gridlock resolution in a political system, the incumbent's re-election chances, legislative bargaining, and policy cycles.

Gridlock Resolution

The majority of elections called under flexible election timing are failure elections. In these cases, dissolution is used by political actors as a means to refer disagreement, crises, and gridlock in government or the assembly to the electorate for resolution. Many of these early elections may well result from strategic choices, that is, they may be chosen as one of several feasible ways of addressing a governance problem. For instance, instead of dissolving the assembly, the existing government might have been replaced with an alternative administration formed by the same parliament. In a small number of other cases, however, the alternative to dissolution would have been gridlock triggered by the assembly's inability to form any government, to support any government office, or to legislate any coherent budget or policy program. Under most constitutions, the consequence in such circumstances would be gridlock or the formation of a caretaker administration with restricted powers to initiate new policies. Dissolution is a mechanism to address this cause of deadlock by giving voters the opportunity to replace the existing parliament.

This insight lies at the heart of one of the most prominent arguments concerning the effects of fixed and flexible election timing. According to Linz (1990, 54), the central disadvantage of fixed electoral terms is that they leave "no room for the continuous readjustments that events may demand." Linz applies this argument exclusively to presidential democracies that feature fixed electoral terms, and proposes that, consequently, "[r]eplacing a president who has lost the confidence of his party or the people is an extremely difficult proposition" (Linz 1990, 54–55). In contrast, endogenously timed elections featured by most parliamentary democracies impart flexibility to the political process because they enable political actors to respond to a loss of confidence in the prime minister or government, scandals, policy failures, and popularity shocks by dissolving parliament and scheduling new elections (Linz 1990, 55).

This argument has inspired debate and challenge, most notably because flexible election timing is only one mechanism among many that politicians can use to make the kinds of continuous readjustments Linz has in mind (Horowitz, 1990; Mainwaring and Shugart, 1997; Cheibub, 2007). Hence, presidential democracies have proven to be significantly more resilient to gridlock than Linz (1990) anticipated. Nonetheless, the argument has proven influential in shaping the discussion about fixed and flexible electoral terms in general under *any* constitutional format. Among other things, it influenced political debates about removing prime ministerial discretion to time elections in a range of parliamentary democracies such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.¹² While a goal of these reform initiatives is to reduce the scope for opportunistic election calling by the incumbent government, a prominent concern is that abolishing the prime minister's dissolution power may render situations of political crisis and paralysis intractable. This concern reflects two assumptions: (1) that removing a prime minister's discretion to time elections is tantamount to fixing the parliamentary

term entirely, and (2) that removing constitutional opportunities to surf also constrains opportunities to call failure elections.

However, as we have seen, both of these concerns can be addressed. Parliamentary constitutions can permit early election calling to resolve crises and gridlock without granting the prime minister or government full discretion to dissolve parliament (Strøm and Swindle, 2002; Goplerud and Schleiter, 2016). For this reason, institutional rules that remove a prime minister's discretion to time elections reduce political surfing, but need not affect the resort to early elections as a means to address situations of government failure and political crisis (Schleiter and Issar, forthcoming). Hence, it is possible to curb the incumbency advantages conferred by prime ministerial election timing without compromising the capacity of a political system to process conflicts and government failure through early elections.¹³

The Use of Dissolution Powers for Partisan Advantage

In addition to gridlock resolution, early election timing can be used by political actors for partisan advantage, which has implications for the incumbent's re-election chances, parliamentary bargaining (over cabinets and policy), and the cyclicity of policymaking. The vast majority of work in each of these areas has focused on the use of dissolution powers by incumbents for partisan advantage. How other political actors, most notably presidents, may use their influence on parliamentary dissolution for political gain is much less well understood.

The Incumbent's Re-election Chances

Given the extensive literature on the economic conditions that trigger political surfing, studies of the *electoral consequences* of endogenously timed elections are surprisingly rare. Only a handful of studies address the question whether incumbents who control the timing of elections can also, to some extent, control their electoral fate.

Extant work generates two contradictory predictions about the electoral benefits of political surfing. On the one hand, the literature on political surfing anticipates that incumbents time elections when they expect to win (e.g., Chowdhury, 1993; Ito, 1990; Kayser, 2005, 2006), and therefore, by assumption, we should see them win opportunistic elections more often than regular elections. On the other hand, incumbents may be fallible and voters may punish opportunism (Blais et al., 2004; Smith, 2004), so that, on balance, opportunism may not actually pay: First, incumbents may make poor election timing choices because the decision they face is complex. To maximize the benefits of an early election call they must time the election in the last best period, that is, the last time before regularly scheduled elections when they are popular, taking account of potential future downturns in their popularity (Smith, 2004, 2003). These timing choices are ultimately based on best guesses rather than certainty, which makes for a difficult (and error-prone) calculation. Second, voters may react adversely to opportunistic election calls either because such elections signal an impending decline in economic (or other

government) performance (Smith, 1996, 99), or because voters perceive early elections as a procedurally unfair attempt by the incumbent to skew the electoral playing field (Blais et al., 2004). Both concerns may cause voters to withdraw their support for the government.

Two case-oriented studies address these divergent expectations in part: Blais et al. (2004) use survey data about the Canadian early elections of 2000 and find that the early timing provoked resentment among some voters. Roy and Alcantara (2012) employ an internet-based voting experiment to study the effect of opportunistic election timing on electoral gains in the context of Canada. They report that electoral gains are measurable, but only if elections are timed immediately after heightened levels of positive media coverage of the government.¹⁴ Schleiter and Tavits (2016) advance the debate by offering the first cross-national comparative analysis of the electoral effects of opportunistic election timing in 27 eastern and western European countries. They find that opportunistic election calling generates a vote share bonus for the incumbent of as much as 5 percentage points, a large effect that amounts to the vote share of a successful small party in many of the countries included in the study. Building on this work, Schleiter and Tavits (2018) shed light on the mechanisms that drive voter reactions to opportunistic election timing using survey experiments. The findings suggest that opportunism negatively affects support for the incumbent because it engenders voter concern about the incumbent's future performance and about procedural fairness. However, against a background of good economic performance, which often triggers electoral opportunism, voters are still more likely to support than oppose the incumbent despite their negative reaction to opportunism. Jointly, these results explain why incumbents engage in opportunism despite the cost and why they are able to derive a net electoral benefit from it in the context of favorable circumstances.

The conclusion that incumbents are able to use endogenous election timing for political advantage raises the broader question whether other political actors, too, are able to employ their assembly dissolution powers for partisan gain. This question is most pertinent to presidents, who, like incumbent governments, often have significant influence on early election calling in parliamentary and semipresidential democracies. To presidents, a parliamentary dissolution that benefits their political allies can have numerous benefits—it may return the presidential party to office, give the president influence on ministerial selection, and open up opportunities to advance policies that reflect presidential preferences (O'Neil, 1993; Millard, 2000; Amorim Neto and Costa Lobo, 2009; van Ooyen, 2015). Judicious influence on assembly dissolution can therefore be expected to aid presidents in building their own and their party's political reputation. To date, the only comparative study to examine this type of presidential activism in the electoral arena is Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2018). Focusing on directly and indirectly elected presidents in European democracies, the study asks whether these heads of state use their influence on election calling for the advantage of their political allies in government. The findings suggest that presidents with extensive dissolution powers are able to shape the electoral success of incumbents: prime ministers whose governments are allied to such presidents realize a significant vote and seat share bonus.

Parliamentary Bargaining

The power to time elections affects not just how parties fare in elections but also how they bargain with each other in the legislature. Simply put, discretion to schedule early elections enables parties with favorable electoral prospects to extract concessions from their peers who fear losing votes and seats. The threat of an early election, then, is a bargaining tool with consequences for governments and policy.

Turning first to bargaining about governments, in most parliamentary (and semipresidential) democracies, governments are made and broken as a result of legislative negotiations rather than elections alone, because single-party parliamentary majorities are rare (Gallagher et al., 2011, 401). Moreover, in the context of discretionary election timing, these negotiations inevitably occur in the shadow of elections so that popular parties enjoy bargaining power. As noted previously, Lupia and Strøm's (1995) seminal paper lays the theoretical basis for understanding bargaining about executive power and highlights that popular parties do not inevitably call premature elections. Instead, they may use the threat of a dissolution to extract—in office currency—the cost of early elections from other, electorally vulnerable parties (Lupia and Strøm, 1995; see also Diermeier and Stevenson, 2000).

Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2009) offer a first study of the effects of election timing powers on the twin risks of early government termination—early elections and nonelectoral replacements. Their results corroborate the finding that prime ministers who can time elections unilaterally surf, which raises the risk of early elections.¹⁵ Interestingly, the study also reveals that the frequency of nonelectoral terminations is not reduced when prime ministers have powers to time early elections. This suggests that these premiers are no less likely to renegotiate coalitions during the interelectoral term. Constitutional constraints on discretionary dissolution, in contrast, lower the early election risk and cause parties to resolve their differences through interelectoral government changes instead. Finally, presidents with discretion to dissolve appear to employ this power to influence parliamentary bargaining about nonelectoral replacements rather than early election calling. In sum, the study provides extensive evidence that different political actors employ both *early election calls* and the *threat of such a call* to achieve office-related goals in parliamentary bargaining.

A fundamentally similar logic applies to parliamentary bargaining about policy and legislation. Popular incumbents with the power to dissolve parliament can make clear that early elections will be called unless parliament accedes to a particular outcome, such as passing a legislative decision or desisting from doing so (Becher and Christiansen, 2015). Hence, credible dissolution threats can be expected to enable executives who might otherwise struggle to achieve parliamentary agreement to secure legislative concessions from unpopular parties. Becher and Christiansen's (2015) findings support these expectations and suggest that favorable public opinion is most useful to, and most likely to be exploited by, chief executives with weak parliamentary support when an early election would be most costly to unpopular parties, that is, long before a new election must be held.

Policy Cycles

Election timing rules affect not just policy bargaining but also the rhythm of policy cycles. The reason for this is that politicians are acutely aware that voters reward or punish governments for their record in office (Fiorina, 1981; Key, 1966; Powell, 2000). When voters evaluate their government, moreover, they do not weigh performance across its term equally. Instead, the evidence suggests that the electorate prioritizes recent government performance, while discounting the more distant past (Bartels, 2008; Bechtel and Hainmueller, 2011). With that in mind, governments moderate their policy choices with an eye to the next election. Specifically, they aim to achieve outcomes that are closer to the preferences of the electorate as elections approach while postponing outcomes that diverge from those preferences to times when no election is looming. As a result, elections tend to give rise to policy cycles with consequences for domestic (in particular economic) and foreign policy.

The electoral cycle also gives politicians incentives to pay careful attention to time inconsistencies in the effects of policies. Many policies generate costs and benefits on different time scales. A tax cut, for instance, may improve voter welfare in the short term while imposing costs in the form of cuts to government-funded services in the long term. In contrast, austerity measures reduce government services (e.g., education, transportation, security and defense, health and social services) in the short term in order to improve macroeconomic credibility among private investors and to enable borrowing from capital markets in the longer run (Hallerberg and Wolff, 2008).

Given these time inconsistencies, leaders can opportunistically choose to implement electorally beneficial policies prior to elections with long-run costs that will only become evident after polling day. In addition they may prefer to enact policies with significant short run costs at points in time when elections are distant. Election timing rules condition these policy cycles: Endogenous election timing tends to attenuate electorally motivated policy cycles to a degree because it allows incumbents to substitute the surfing of waves of support for costly economic manipulation as a means to improve their re-election chances (Kayser, 2005).

Economic Policy Cycles

Models of political-economic cycles originally assumed fixed electoral terms, during which incumbents use macroeconomic, that is, monetary (Nordhaus, 1975) or fiscal (Drazen, 2001), policy tools, to boost their re-election chances by improving voter welfare prior to elections. According to these models, governments manipulate the economy for electoral benefit by shifting economic resources from the future to the pre-election present, which imposes a hidden, distortionary tax on the economy after the election (Nordhaus, 1975; Rogoff and Sibert, 1988; Rogoff, 1990).

Scholars soon adapted these models to a more realistic institutional setting by accounting for the ability of governments in most parliamentary democracies to influence the timing of elections (Chappell and Peel, 1979; Lächler, 1982; Kayser, 2005). A

prominent theoretical argument in this literature is that politicians can be expected to substitute opportunistic election timing for costly and distortionary attempts to manipulate the economy (Kayser, 2005; see also Franzese and Jusko, 2006).

Empirically, there is some support for this argument from case-oriented studies of Japan and India, which suggests that politicians substitute election timing for the opportunistic use of economic policy, so that economic manipulation prior to elections is muted or absent (Ito and Park, 1988; Ito, 1990; Chowdhury, 1993).¹⁶ Likewise, a cross-national study by Efthyvoulou (2012) reports manipulation prior to regular but not early elections.¹⁷ Perhaps the most compelling evidence is mustered by a comparative study that focuses on the strategic timing of austerity measures. According to Hübscher and Sattler (2017), decisions to implement austerity measures are conditioned by the electoral cycle in conjunction with the incumbent's electoral vulnerability. Electorally vulnerable governments time fiscal cuts early in their term, and take particular care to avoid the implementation of such measures prior to elections. Moreover, election timing substitutes, in part, for the strategic implementation of economic policy: Leaders with great discretion to time elections pay less careful attention to the timing of austerity measures (Hübscher and Sattler, 2017, 162). These electoral effects on austerity policy are substantively large.

Foreign Policy Cycles

Students of international relations provide similarly compelling evidence that executives choose their policies with an eye to the next election. The literature on international conflict draws attention to the potentially high costs of international conflict in terms of human lives and financial resources, which generate incentives for governments to avoid aggressive behavior as democratic elections approach. Thus, Gaubatz (1991) finds that the prospect of losses in democratic elections induces pacific behavior in the executive (see also Huth and Allee, 2002). Yet, this evidence appears to be contradicted by other cross-national studies that have failed to identify a systematic relationship between foreign policy aggression and elections (Lian and Oneal, 1993; DeRouen, 1995; Leeds and Davis, 1997; Meernik and Waterman, 1996).

Williams (2013) hypothesizes that these inconsistent findings are, at least in part, attributable to the preponderance of endogenous election timing in many developed democracies. This renders the precise timing of the elections—and thus the public's opportunity to hold the government accountable—largely uncertain. Hence, in the context of endogenous election timing, strategic conflict behavior on the part of politicians ought to be guided by *leader's vulnerability to an early election* rather than the next regular election date alone. Studying conflict behavior by executives in 17 developed parliamentary democracies, Williams (2013) finds support for that theory. Leaders who face a high *risk* of an election in the immediate future, that is, those who lack majority support and are near the end of their constitutional term, are significantly less likely to initiate international conflict. Conversely, executives who face a low election risk are most likely to engage in conflict abroad. Moreover, the results of the study suggest that these electoral effects on foreign policy behavior are large. They rival, and occasionally exceed, the

magnitude of some of the most important predictors of international conflict, including major power status and geographical contiguity (Williams, 2013, 10).

In sum, the literatures on economic and foreign policy cycles provide compelling evidence that all elections—whether endogenously or exogenously timed—engender policy cycles. However, endogenous election timing tends to attenuate this cyclicality to a degree because it enables incumbents to substitute political surfing for opportunistic policy manipulation as a means to improve their re-election chances.

LACUNAE AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While existing scholarship has significantly expanded the understanding of dissolution powers, the nature of early elections, their causes and consequences over the last 30 years, it has also left a range of important questions unresolved. This final section focuses on gaps in three broad areas:

First, as noted previously, election timing rules vary extensively across democratic constitutions, yet the origins of these constitutional rules remain remarkably poorly understood. A quick survey of this variation suggests some correlations. For instance, older constitutional monarchies are more likely to give greater powers to dissolve to a prime minister and government than newer republics, which typically restrain the incumbent to a greater extent. Clearly, these choices, are, at least in part, shaped by a historically contingent understanding of how best to secure democracy. Given the fact that constitutional dissolution regimes were typically forged as a part of a wider constitutional settlement, dissolution powers are also likely to reflect a wider understanding of competing models of democracy. In addition, the crises that triggered these constitutional settlements, such as revolutions, regime collapse, defeat in war, or independence (Elster, 1995, 371), and experience with previous constitutional rules regulating dissolution, is likely to have shaped the choices that parties and constitutional assemblies made. To date, however, our understanding of the influence of these different factors on the choice of dissolution regimes remains underdeveloped.

Second, scholars have focused overwhelmingly on election timing at the national rather than the subnational level. Yet, the question of election timing is also relevant to subnational politics, and multilevel polities may choose various combinations of flexible and fixed election timing at national and subnational levels. This has implications for the synchronization of electoral cycles and policy across different tiers of government. For instance, the UK (until 2011) combined full prime ministerial discretion to time elections flexibly at the national level with very restricted opportunities to schedule early elections for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. When the prime minister's discretion to time elections flexibly at the national level was curbed by the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act (2011),

adjustments were made to the terms of the devolved assemblies in order to avoid a synchronization of national and devolved policy and electoral cycles. Clearly, then, to politicians the relative timing of national and subnational elections is an important concern. However, the implications of different election timing rules for election outcomes, policy cycles, policy collaboration, and coordination across different tiers of government remains poorly understood.

Third, the extant literature has only just begun to explore the political implications of investing actors other than the incumbent, most notably presidents, with extensive discretion to dissolve the assembly. If these powers can be used by presidents to affect the electoral fate of the incumbent government, as Schleiter and Morgan-Jones (2018) suggest, then they can almost certainly also be deployed to influence legislative bargaining about governments and policy. To date, these implications remain completely unexplored.

In sum, election timing rules are some of the most fundamental and consequential prerogatives in a democracy because they have major repercussions in the electoral and legislative arena. They condition the nature and frequency of early elections, shape the mechanisms that are available for gridlock resolution, the electoral prospects of governments, legislative bargaining, and policy cycles. As this survey of the literature has shown, the last 15 years have seen a fundamental transformation in the study of these rules. We now better understand how they vary, why they give rise to different types of early elections, and how they shape the power of various political actors in bargaining over government and policy. Together these results imply that election timing rules may be as consequential as electoral systems in shaping democratic representation and accountability as well as political outcomes that affect voter welfare. Yet, present research has only begun to scratch the surface of these implications.

NOTES

1. Note that scholars and politicians employ two distinct types of terminology to discuss endogenous and exogenous elections. Electoral terms and election dates are often referred to as *fixed* in political systems with exogenous election timing because they are determined by law. In contrast, systems that employ endogenous elections have *flexible* interelectoral terms, which are determined, to some extent, by political choice.
2. Common and legal language using the notion of “fixed” and “flexible” electoral terms in some instances departs from this definition. For instance, legislation that reduces, but does not abolish, the dependence of election timing on political choice occasionally claims to introduce “fixed terms.” Two cases in point are Canada’s Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act (2007) and the UK’s Fixed-Term Parliaments Act (2011). In both instances the reference to fixed terms is erroneous because political choices can still bring about early elections: In Canada the governor general retains discretionary power to dissolve Parliament at the request of the prime minister; in the UK, parliament can dissolve itself prematurely by a vote of a two-thirds majority of its total membership (including vacant seats) or when parliament votes no confidence in a government and then fails to express confidence in a government within 14 days.

3. Out of 39 OECD and EU parliamentary democracies studied by Goplerud and Schleiter (2016), only one, Norway, does not permit early parliamentary elections.
4. Parliamentary and semipresidential regimes are defined by the cabinet's accountability to parliament (Strøm et al., 2003), semipresidential democracies additionally feature a directly elected presidential head of state. In parliamentary democracies with presidential heads of state, the president is indirectly elected (Elgie, 1999).
5. Note that assembly confidence systems may also permit a degree of endogenous election timing at the subnational level. In Germany, for example, *Land*-level parliaments can be prematurely dissolved. However, the research available to date has focused overwhelmingly on endogenous election timing at the national level.
6. While presidential constitutions do not permit the removal of a president from office as part of normal politics, these constitutions do envisage impeachment procedures to address serious abuses of presidential office including treason, the violation of the constitution, or involvement in criminal activity.
7. Surprisingly, this distinction is often ignored. For instance, in the literature on political business cycles, regular elections in parliamentary democracies are often equated with exogenous elections (Brender and Drazen, 2005; Vergne, 2009; Katsimi and Sarantides, 2012; Ehrhart, 2013).
8. However, two studies find no cross-national evidence of political surfing (Alesina et al., 1993; Alesina and Roubini, 1992). Palmer and Whitten (2000) attribute this null finding to problems with the data and modeling.
9. Empirical work on political surfing typically proceeds as if all early elections can be attributed to surfing and takes no account of that heterogeneity (Alesina et al., 1993; Alesina and Roubini, 1992; Chowdhury, 1993; Ito, 1990). Only one study, Palmer and Whitten (2000) seeks to establish, at the level of the individual election, whether the dissolution of parliament was in fact due to the incumbent government's choice.
10. Incumbents may react strategically to anticipated risks and difficulties by choosing early elections to minimize their electoral losses and hold on to office. Theoretically and empirically, it is possible to distinguish such cases, in which a prime minister exercises discretion for partisan benefit, from situations in which the dominant governing party's political defeat triggers an election without leaving a prime minister room for discretion.
11. Note, this definition also accommodates situations in which incumbent prime ministers call early elections to consolidate their position in order to sidestep anticipated difficulties or challenges to their hold on power.
12. House of Commons Library, "Fixed-Term Parliaments" (2010), SN/PC/831; Parliamentary Service, *Parliamentary Terms: Fixed and Flexible* (2013), New Zealand: Parliamentary Library Research Paper; *Whitaker Report (Art. 28)* (1996), Report of the Constitution Review Group, Republic of Ireland; Roy and Alcantara (2012).
13. As the literature on political business cycles notes, politicians may additionally make use of economic manipulation to influence their re-election chances. This strategy may be used in conjunction with election timing or as a substitute (Chowdhury, 1993; Ito, 1990; Kayser, 2005). In political reform debates, the potential link between election timing and economic manipulation is a further factor that deserves attention.
14. Empirical studies on the topic overwhelmingly focus on a single country and some do not directly address the question of interest or present mixed results (Grofman and Roozendaal, 1994; Smith, 1996, 2003, 2004). Smith's work relies on a case study of the UK

and focuses on the signaling effects of early elections by comparing election results to voter support for the incumbent before the elections were called. Grofman and Roozendaal (1994) focus on ten incumbent governments that orchestrated early elections in the Netherlands and describe that some of them gained while others lost votes.

15. This corroborates Strøm and Swindle's (2002) finding that early elections are more frequent when a prime minister's power to dissolve is not checked by the head of state, cabinet, or parliament, as is consistent with political surfing.
16. Note, however, that other case studies suggest no such substitution effect. Cargill and Hutchinson (1991), for instance, find that Japanese governments manipulate the economy for electoral purposes while also triggering early elections during periods of real output growth (see also Heckelman and Berument, 1998).
17. However, Katsimi and Sarantides (2012) find cycles in the run-up to regular elections as well as unexpected deficit cycles prior to early elections. A concern regarding both of these comparative studies is that they treat regular elections as exogenous. However, as we have seen previously, in constitutional contexts in which election timing is to some degree discretionary, even the timing of regular elections is the result of a political decision. Hence these studies are unable to address concerns about endogeneity. Endogeneity arises because both political surfing and economic manipulation are jointly conditioned by observable and unobservable factors such as incumbent competence and popularity. For example, competent governments may have little incentive to make use of either strategy while incompetent governments may seek to use both extensively. Similarly, positive shocks to the incumbent's popularity may allow incompetent governments to surf while refraining from manipulation of the economy.

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CHAPTER 6

TIME RULES AND TIME BUDGETS IN LEGISLATURES

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If time is a “symbolic product of human coordination and ascription of significance, collectively shaped and moulded at a deep level” (Nowotny, 1996, 8), then legislatures¹ are the political arena in which these characteristics become visible most impressively. Legislatures—and in particular the floor—can be regarded as a “plenary bottleneck” (Cox, 2006, 141) that all activities have to pass through. This has far-reaching temporal consequences for all parliamentary activities such as holding the executive accountable and discussing current affairs in general and, in particular, debating and passing legislative proposals. This chapter takes a closer look at parliamentary *Eigenzeit* as the “system-specific patterns of temporal organization which affect institutional decision-making competences by means of allocating time budgets and temporal sovereignty” (Riescher, 1994, 228).² The German term “*Eigenzeit*” could be translated as individual (or institutional) “self-time” (see Nowotny, 1996, 2). Its antonym is the time of the external environment. This distinction allows us to delineate the endogenous from the exogenous nature of time problems.

Parliamentary *Eigenzeit* is the result of specific time rules and time budgets. Time rules are (formal and informal) norms that allocate time budgets to actors and regulate both the internal and external temporal relations of legislatures. If we also take into respect legislatures’ external relations, these rules and budgets constitute the parliamentary timescape as the “totality of time rules and the temporal regularities with which they are associated” (Goetz, 2012, 704). In the following, the focus is on internal relations (including those between chambers in bicameral legislatures).³ The perhaps most important trend recognizable in virtually all legislatures’ timescapes is the ever-increasing formalization of time rules, which, over time, become more numerous, more detailed, and more binding.

Scholarly opinion divides with respect to the impact of this formalization of time rules. On the one hand, the growing speed—that is, acceleration—of politics in general and legislative activity in particular is regarded as the major reason for attempts to render the passage through the plenary bottleneck increasingly predictable. From

this perspective, legislators allegedly find it increasingly challenging to synchronize parliamentary time with the accelerated timescapes underlying economic, social, cultural, and technological developments (Scheuerman, 2004; Rosa, 2005). This problem is aggravated by the structural limitation of parliamentary time budgets resulting from elections. The core problem of unrestricted external acceleration and fixed internal time budgets has its most immediate—nonbraked—effect in the legislative arena.⁴ On the other hand, some scholars argue that the lack of time resulting from this clash of temporalities can, just like any other temporal limitation—also be used strategically by individual legislators, majorities, and minorities alike (e.g., Riescher, 1994; Howlett and Goetz, 2014). This chapter assesses the arguments underlying claims of acceleration, temporal frictions, and the strategic use and aims to appraise to which extent these are able to explain the evolution of time rules and budgets in legislatures.

Our assessment starts with an overview of theories on the impact of acceleration and the strategic use of the temporal frictions that follow the (allegedly) ever-increasing pace of legislative activities. The second section introduces the concepts allowing us to differentiate particular time rules and mechanisms defining time budgets, most notably agenda control and committee power. Against this background, the third section discusses six feasible institutional and behavioral solutions to time problems in legislatures. The patterns underlying these possible solutions culminate in two basic and mutually exclusive procedural ideal types which each create different time budgets for different subgroups of legislators by means of different time rules. On the one hand, legislatures can increase their temporal efficiency by limiting access to parliamentary time and exclusively granting temporal discretion to a subgroup of legislators, the majority. This solution implies a focus of legislators to talk on the floor, be it in order to justify or prevent the passage of legislation, be it to hold the government accountable. On the other hand, legislatures can address time problems by segmenting the plenary floor and delegating tasks to committees and their members. This solution implies a common emphasis among legislators on work in committees. As a consequence, the (alleged) time problem in legislatures can trigger either a development toward a working or a talking legislature with distinct behavioral preferences. The fourth section aims to assess the consequences and empirical frequency of different ideal types—for want of preexisting analyses in a tentative fashion. The preliminary evidence presented here challenges the assumption of ever-increasing time problems in legislatures and suggests that time is an opportunity rather than a constraint.

HOW SOON IS NOW? THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN LEGISLATURES AND ITS STRATEGIC USE

Even though there is no “objective” time, actors’ perception of it might well have causal consequences (see Grzymala-Busse, 2011). In this effect, scholars who regard

acceleration as an origin of temporal regulation in legislatures identify two major origins of time pressures (see Cox, 1987, 52–60; Döring, 1996): First, the growing number of policy areas requiring regulation by law. Since the nineteenth century, there has been a growing demand for economic and social policies allegedly triggering ever-increasing legislative activities. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the growing desire of legislators to communicate to their voters that they represent and advance the latter's political preferences. Both origins are primarily associated with legislation, which explains why the time problem is at the origin of the transformation of political assemblies—often historically conceived of as “inquests of the nation” with a particular emphasis on “freedom of debate”—into primarily legislative bodies (Koß, 2018).

What is, however, surprising about the claim of acceleration as one of the most prominent problems currently haunting legislatures (see Rosa, 2005; Scheuerman, 2004) is that Carl Schmitt, writing in the mid-twentieth century, is often regarded as one of its most prominent observers (Scheuerman, 2004, 105–143). According to Schmitt, “law making procedures become ever faster and more circumscribed, the path towards the achievement of legal regulation shorter, and the share of jurisprudence smaller” (Schmitt, 1950, 18, as translated by Scheuerman, 2004, 105). This led Schmitt to infer that liberal (i.e., legislature-based) statute law always comes too late. More importantly, it served as a justification—or perhaps even a pretense—for his conclusion that liberal democracy was unfit to deal with the problems of his day. As biting and timely one might find this diagnosis of the consequences of acceleration for legislatures—it was made seventy years ago. In fact, even classic proponents of parliamentary reform like John Stuart Mill and Walter Bagehot based their argument on novel levels of legislative workload.⁵ According to Mill, “skilled legislation and administration” were “growing ever more important as human affairs increase in scale and in complexity” (Mill, [1861] 2008, 284). Remarkably, Bagehot made a similar observation but concluded that only substantial workload ensured that legislators refrained from engaging in idle factional disputes: “To keep a legislature efficient, it must have a sufficient supply of substantial business. [. . .] Where great questions end, little parties begin” (Bagehot, [1867] 2001, 30). This suggests that acceleration is neither novel nor necessarily problematic. On the contrary, as Bagehot observes, acceleration could similarly be the very condition necessary for coherent majorities, which—in turn—allow voters to assess the consequences of their choice at the ballot box.

In the current debate on the impact of acceleration on legislative politics, Scheuerman (2001, 2004) and Rosa (2005) see this process most critically. According to them, legislatures lose their ability to legitimate decisions by means of their procedures (see Luhmann, 1993) if acceleration crosses a certain threshold. The ensuing “political time crisis” (Rosa, 2005, 403) implies that politics in general—and legislatures in particular—cannot synchronize the *Eigenzeit* of the political and other spheres, most notably the economic one. Scheuerman (2001) further warns that continuous acceleration undermines the division of labor between (slow and deliberative) legislatures and (fast and decisionist) executives. As he points out in this handbook,⁶ the executive branch is the usual suspect to benefit from increased acceleration. Additionally, the growing

complexity of economic, social, and environmental matters subject to political decisions renders more and more of these decisions irreversible, thus violating a fundamental prerequisite of legislative democracy. Indeed, slow-moving but (near) all-encompassing processes such as climate change (see Pierson, 2004, ch. 3) illustrate another temporal challenge for legislatures because they exacerbate the clash between long (nonpolitical) and short (political) time horizons.

In contrast to these theories emphasizing the restrictive implications of temporal change for legislatures, other authors pay more attention to their enabling character. Irrespective of the impact of acceleration, legislators can strategically delay and speed up processes in order to reach their goals. In this respect, legislatures are ideal arenas for political actors to apply “time-strategies” (Nowotny, 1996, 100) by affecting the timing, sequence, speed, and duration of parliamentary processes, most notably the legislative one (see Dreischer, 2009, 34–39; Howlett and Goetz, 2014). For instance, oppositions could use committees to extract policy concessions from governments. Similarly, majorities could refer to time pressures in order to speed up procedures and suggest to informally drop a formally required reading of a bill. Even a strategic deceleration is possible in the parliamentary arena, be it for constructive purposes, for instance through the insertion of expert hearings in the legislative process, or destructively, by excessive exploitation of minority rights in order to obstruct (legislative) business.

Irrespective of whether time is a problem or a solution, two things should have become clear from this section: time is always a “scarce resource” (Döring, 1995) requiring regulatory action. For this reason, we need to conceptually assess different time rules allocating time budgets to parliamentary actors. Only the interplay of time rules and time budgets will then allow us to examine potential solutions to the time problem in legislatures.

THESE THINGS TAKE TIME: TIME RULES AND TIME BUDGETS DEFINED

This section first introduces the two most important sets of time rules allowing actors to handle the scarcity of time (be it in a strategic fashion or not), those determining who controls the plenary agenda and the power of committees. An assessment of the resulting time budgets of legislators then allows us to specify six potential solutions to the time problem in legislatures. The section concludes with an overview of the two “timeproof” procedural ideal types, talking and working legislatures.

Time Rules

Time rules serve the separation of powers and the legitimation of parliamentary decisions by granting and denying powers and by specifying under which conditions

proposals can (and cannot) be disputed (Riescher, 1994, 207–222). In the parliamentary arena, the most important subsets of these rules are those of agenda control and committee power.⁷ The former determine who is entitled to plenary time (be it to present or to amend proposals) and who can close debates (Döring, 1995; Tsebelis and Rasch, 2011). Therefore, control over the parliamentary agenda allows legislators to affect the timing, sequence, speed, and duration of parliamentary processes.

Agenda control has three dimensions: timetable, positive, and negative.⁸ Depending on whether majorities possess privileges in agenda-setting or not, agenda control is centralized or decentralized. Timetable control determines not only which proposal enters (and does not enter) the floor, but also includes the advance determination of the length of debates (if existent) and the allocation of speaking time (see Proksch and Slapin, 2015). Most likely, either the (government) majority or a steering body controls the parliamentary timetable. A variant of timetable control usually found in presidential systems is the gatekeeping power of committees, which allows these to decide whether or not a proposal enters the floor (Crombez et al., 2006). Speaking time can also be allocated by the speaker at the request of legislators.

Positive agenda control refers to the power to amend proposals on the parliamentary timetable. Especially in presidential systems, committees can be invested with this power if so-called closed rules allow ruling out amendments to the committee during the floor stage. In parliamentary systems, positive agenda control is usually exerted by governments which may, under so-called restrictive rules, be allowed to exclude amendments to proposals (Romer and Rosenthal, 1978; Huber, 1992). Finally, positive agenda control encompasses sequencing rules for providing particular actors with the power to table the last amendment prior to decision-making (Heller, 2001).

Negative agenda control allows parliamentary actors to ensure that decisions on proposals can be taken. The most important norm in this respect is the closure rule, which allows majorities to decide that the plenary proceeds to decision-making. The confidence procedure is another time rule of negative agenda control. Especially when linked to the dissolution of the legislature, confidence procedures allow governments to discipline the majority and ensure the passage of proposals (Huber, 1996b; Diermeier and Feddersen, 1998). Guillotine motions that determine the overall time allocated to a legislative proposal and accordingly trigger the termination of a debate are also part of negative agenda control. However, negative agenda control is only effective if it requires simple majorities. Supermajoritarian thresholds—such as the two-thirds majority for the closure of debate in the US Senate—are hard to meet and imply a factual lack of temporal regulation, which allows for legislative obstruction by means of filibusters. Another form of negative agenda control in presidential systems is the presidential veto over legislation, especially when it can only be overruled by supermajorities (Shugart and Carey, 1992, 134–138).

However, there is another set of time rules that allows legislators to slow down parliamentary procedures without any loss of speed. These rules concern committees, which, if powerful enough, are effectively means to segment the plenary by enabling subgroups of legislators to simultaneously debate proposals in a more in-depth fashion. To this effect, plenary activities can be delegated to committees. The more powerful committees

are, the more effective this delegation is. The most essential feature of powerful committees is that they have access to the information required to have a substantial impact on proposals (Krehbiel, 1991). Which features exactly make committees powerful is a matter of dispute (see Mattson and Strøm, 1995; Martin, 2014). Above all, the literature links committee power to two features: on the one hand, the ability to change proposals during the committee stage and, on the other hand, the ability to obtain the information necessary to do so in a meaningful way (Martin and Vanberg, 2011, 35; André et al., 2016, 111). Institutionally, the prerequisite for both of these features is that committees are permanent. This leaves us with three dimensions of committee power.

The first dimension, permanence, is crucial for committees because only members of permanent committees interact on a regular basis, which is why they develop not only expertise but also mutual trust, with the potential to override other loyalties (e.g., with their party groups). This mutual trust can be regarded as a prerequisite for effective scrutiny of legislative proposals, granting majority and minority legislators influence vis-à-vis the government. The second dimension of committee power is rewriting authority, which ensures that the committee version of a legislative proposal is the source of the final reading(s) in the plenary. If the committee version becomes the starting point of plenary debates, this entrusts committee members with considerable drafting authority over legislative proposals. This drafting authority ensures that committees serve as gatekeepers of the information they collect (Mattson and Strøm, 1995, 300).

The third dimension of committee power is the jurisdictional congruence of committees with executive departments. The better the “fit” between committee and departmental structure, the more easily the former can extract information from the latter, not least on upcoming legislative proposals (Mattson and Strøm, 1995, 270). Put differently, congruence of committees to departments is sufficient for information privileges. Such information privileges render it more likely that committees claim “property rights” over policy areas (Martin, 2014, 361) and that committee members are granted informal access of committee members to ministers which Martin and Vanberg (2011, 36) regard as crucial for committee power.

Time Budgets

While time rules determine how proposals in legislatures are dealt with temporally, time budgets refer to the overall time available for parliamentary proceedings, be it for the legislature as such, be it for subgroups of legislators. In particular, time budgets consist of the length of time available and the time horizons this implies for legislators. Beyond the internal time rules outlined in the previous subsection, external factors also affect these time budgets, most notably their synchronization, existing sitting limitations, and whether or not proposals can be carried over to the following session. As a consequence, time budgets determine to which extent legislators are able to coordinate their temporalities with other actors involved in the political process such as executives and other chambers in bicameral legislatures.

While time rules can be similar in parliamentary and presidential systems, there exists a fundamental difference of time budgets between systems: In parliamentary

systems, the time budgets of legislatures and executives are necessarily synchronized as there mostly is no separate election of the head of government and, more importantly, the prime minister is responsible to parliament. The same is true for assembly-independent systems of government such as the Swiss one (see Ganghof, 2014). In contrast, semipresidential and presidential systems allow for a desynchronization of congresses and presidential executives. In fact, they even rely on this because of the separation-of-powers doctrine underlying nonparliamentary forms of government.⁹

Another form of desynchronization leading to different time budgets within the legislature is staggered membership of legislators. This implies only a partial renewal and overlapping terms of members. Here, the goal is also to temporally institutionalize a separation of powers and to render legislatures eternal bodies by ruling out a full-fledged discontinuity of members (see Riescher, 1994, 57–59). The US and French Senates are prominent examples of legislatures with staggered memberships. In both, legislators serve six-year terms, but one-third of them are newly elected every other year.

The length of legislators' time budgets also depends on whether or not there is a (constitutionally or otherwise) fixed number of sittings or whether nonparliamentary actors (such as, historically, the monarch, or presidents) are entitled to close sessions. Both variants severely limit the power of the legislature, which becomes unable to define its own periodicity (Riescher, 1994, 52). In general, these limitations date back to the predemocratic age and have subsequently been abandoned in most cases. Today, most legislatures can decide themselves about the number of sittings and their dissolution—like the British House of Commons¹⁰—or operate under fixed terms without any possibility of dissolution—like both chambers of the US Congress. An exception among established democracies where the fixed number of sittings survived is France. Here, an attempt to explicitly limit the power of the National Assembly during the transition toward the Fifth Republic entailed a limitation of the number of sittings to 80 (extended to 120 in, 1995). Scarcity of time budgets clearly became a weapon of the executive since the extraordinary sittings could only be held at the request of the president. The factual number of sittings per year in legislatures ranges between 50 (e.g., Swiss Nationalrat, German Bundestag) and more than 150 (e.g., British House of Commons, US House of Representatives).

Finally, legislators' time horizons are affected by the lifespan of bills (Döring, 1995). The earlier proposals pending approval lapse, the narrower the time budget for those in favor of it is. If bills die at the end of a legislative period or even a session, this continuously constrains majority power.

NOWHERE FAST: SOLUTIONS TO THE TIME PROBLEM IN LEGISLATURES

This section discusses the six combinations of time rules and time budgets that allow legislators to effectively address the time problem in legislatures. Two of these solutions introduce temporal privileges, two create additional time, and two aim to bypass legislatures. As we will see, these solutions empirically culminate in two ideal types

of parliamentary *Eigenzeit*, talking and working legislatures. Whether the solutions outlined here can be regarded as responses to external constraints or attempts to strategically affect the temporalities of legislatures will then be assessed in the final section.

Two Solutions That Create Temporal Privileges

The perhaps simplest way to economize time in legislatures is to deny particular actors (most likely: minorities) access to it by means of centralization of agenda control in the hands of the majority. In this respect, especially privileged access to the parliamentary timetable effectively delegates lawmaking authority to the cabinet. It was the creation of this privilege Bagehot ([1867] 2001) praised as the “efficient secret.” Similarly, legislators could devise informal rules to create privileges among themselves, for instance by creating rules of seniority. Such rules are especially capable to overcome the asynchrony arising from rules of staggered membership (Riescher, 1994, 208).

Two Solutions That Create Additional Time

Rather than privileging particular legislators, time rules could also seek to create additional time. We have already assessed the most efficient way to segment the plenary by creating powerful committees, a solution already suggested by Mill ([1861] 2008). Since only subgroups of legislators sit on committees, this solution requires no additional measures that ensure any synchronization of procedures (see Dreischer, 2009, 40–49). Additional time could also be created sequentially rather than simultaneously by means of another chamber whose consent to legislation is also required. Empirically, such (upper) chambers usually serve as retarding and deliberating bodies.¹¹ However, instead of fostering deliberation, bicameral arrangements can also imply gridlock or an autolimitation of governments anticipating negative decisions of upper chambers on bills (Manow and Burkhart, 2007).

Two Solutions Bypassing Legislatures

Even though the focus of this chapter is on institutional rules and budgets, this does not mean there are no behavioral solutions to time problems. One such solution is party discipline, which bypasses, if not the legislature as such, the normative ideal of deliberation underlying legislative assemblies. Irrespective of time rules, coherent voting allows legislators to deal with more and more topics (Binder, 1997). Against this background, party discipline can be regarded as a functional equivalent of agenda control (Rasch and Tsebelis, 2011). Finally, a more straightforward and also more institutional way to bypass legislatures is to increasingly rule by executive decrees rather than laws and to delegate deliberative processes to (expert) commissions. This solution, which is at the core of the

theories of acceleration revisited in the second section, threatens to hollow out legislative democracy.¹² However, there is also evidence that both ways to bypass legislatures pose less normative problems than is often assumed. On the one hand, sustained party discipline might well be a consequence of legislators' deliberate decision to temporally privilege the majority (e.g., Dewan and Spirling, 2011; see also Rohde and Shepsle, 1987). On the other hand, executive decrees are not necessarily a problem, especially as long as legislatures continue to exert the power of the purse (Cox, 2014) and as long as legislators can overrule executive decrees by means of lawmaking (Carey and Shugart, 1998).

Two Ideal Types

Taken together, the six solutions outlined here culminate in two procedural ideal types of legislatures with particular *Eigenzeit*: talking and working legislatures (Steffani, 1979; Koß, 2018). The core difference between the two is whether one (talking legislatures) or several powerful committees (working legislatures) are created. In talking legislatures, the cabinet can be conceived of as a single powerful executive committee (Bagehot, [1867] 2001, 11; Weber, [1919/20] 2014, 211). Here, legislators focus on talking in the plenary, either in order to delay or to justify decision-making. In order not to thwart the existing temporal privileges of majorities in talking legislatures, neither committees (apart from the cabinet) nor upper chambers are particularly powerful and party discipline is substantial. In contrast, working legislatures increase legislative efficiency by means of a temporal division of labor in powerful committees. This ideal type is at odds with centralized agenda control, but fully compatible with powerful upper chambers and does not require high levels of party discipline. In working legislatures, committees are the sites of policy compromises. By institutionalizing temporal segmentation, committees allow legislators to achieve the level of expertise that serves as the necessary condition to affect legislation (Mezey, 1979; Krehbiel, 1991).

Both talking and working legislatures are observable empirically (Koß, 2018). Hybrids combining centralized agenda control with powerful committees hardly exist, especially among parliamentary systems. If at all, these can be found in semipresidential (e.g., France since 2009) and presidential systems (e.g., the United States). Since majority privileges can most likely only be institutionalized under exceptional circumstances, working legislatures dominate empirically. In western Europe, this only applies to the parliaments of Great Britain, Greece, and Malta. Apart from France, hybrids can be found in Spain and Ireland. The legislative state of nature characterized by decentralized agenda control and weak committees (Cox, 2006) has been overcome everywhere. This suggests that time problems haunt all legislatures and that the other West European legislatures resemble working ones.

It needs to be pointed out that the differentiation between talking and working legislatures implies no normative judgment as both ideal types allow for policy impact of the opposition, either indirectly by means of party discipline and obstruction (in talking legislatures) or directly by means of policy compromises in committees (in working

legislatures). If oppositions possess virtually no temporal privileges, the coherent rejection of any majority proposal becomes a rational means of forcing the government to act coherently itself and pay attention to the preferences of potential dissenters, especially those closer toward the floor median and, by extension, the opposition (Dewan and Spirling, 2011). Similarly, oppositions can obstruct majority proposals. Of course, this does not prevent the latter's passage under centralized agenda control. However, the more time-consuming the passage of proposals is, the fewer proposals can be passed during the remainder of a parliamentary session. In this respect, even futile obstruction can serve as a credible threat with far-reaching anticipatory effects and cause governments to introduce proposals that are more acceptable to oppositions (Fong and Krehbiel, 2018).

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? PATTERNS OF LEGISLATIVE TIME-KEEPING

This section assesses the consequences associated with different time rules and time budgets in legislatures and concludes with a tentative analysis of the question of whether the growing acceleration undermines legislative democracy or allows legislators to apply time strategies.

The Consequences of Different Time Rules

There is indeed evidence that governments in talking legislatures use their agenda-setting power to prioritize their proposals on the legislative timetable (Martin and Vanberg, 2011).¹³ Similarly, if governments control the agenda, fewer amendments to proposals are successful during the legislative stage (Tsebelis and Rasch, 2011). The more centralized agenda control, the fewer proposals are ultimately passed, but these are more complex and politically contested (Döring, 2001; Döring and Hallerberg, 2004). However, even for complex proposals, centralized agenda control reduces the risk of log-rolling by individual legislators (Döring, 2004). What is more, agenda control does not only affect the content, but also the temporalities of policymaking. Notably, government control over the agenda ensures the speedier passage of bills (Huber, 1996a, 1996b; Becker and Saalfeld, 2004). This suggests that governments controlling the agenda can procedurally overcome legislative power-struggles (Döring, 2005), even though this might lead to legitimacy problems and shortened cabinet lengths (Becher et al., 2017).

Apart from the speed of legislative processes, time rules also affect the allocation of speaking time in legislatures. Here, the overall evidence suggests that parties have an incentive to use time for their strategic purposes. If party leaders (and not the Speaker) arrange the list of speakers, more time is allocated to leaders and legislators who are

ideologically congruent with the leadership of opposition parties (Giannetti et al., 2016). However, the more constituency-centered an electoral system, the less emphasis on party unity is necessary and the greater the diversity of speakers even under centralized agenda control (Proksch and Slapin, 2012, 2015). Furthermore, external cycles also affect the distribution of speaking time: the closer an election, the smaller the number of loyal legislators whom party leaders allow to make speeches in legislatures where party leaders select speakers (Bäck et al., 2019).

There is hardly any evidence for the question of whether the relative amount of speaking time available for different parliamentary activities varies under different time rules (for tentative evidence that this is not the case, see Koß and Tan, 2019). Also, there is evidence that more time is allocated to controversial bills (Giannetti et al., 2016), most likely in order to allow coalition partners to express their differing views on these matters (Martin and Vanberg, 2008; Proksch and Slapin, 2015). Apart from agenda control, committee power also affects the temporalities of parliamentary processes. The more powerful committees are, the more time is spent on scrutinizing proposals and the more changes are inserted (Martin and Vanberg, 2011, chs. 4–5; see also Mattson and Strøm, 1995).

Apart from the fundamental difference between parliamentary and presidential systems regarding the synchronization of the legislature and the executive (see the previous section), there is no evidence for distinct time budgets between systems (Riescher, 1994). Rather, individual *Eigenzeiten* of different systems seem to underlie their respective time rules and time budgets. This finding resonates with Luhmann's assumption that time is specific to individual systems (1988, 253–255). At the same time, it also supports the findings of recent scholarship that questions the general meaningfulness of the distinction between parliamentary and presidential systems (Cheibub et al., 2014).

Is Parliamentary Time a Constraint or a Resource?

To conclude the empirical analysis, let us resume the question raised in the theoretical section: Is acceleration a constraint or an opportunity for legislators to apply time strategies? Since systematic long-term analyses of parliamentary activity hardly exist,¹⁴ we need to confine our analysis to some tentative assessment here. In order to find out which legislatures to compare, let us first differentiate four legislatures with most different temporalities. Figure 6.1 identifies temporally distinct legislatures by asking for the presence of the single most important internal and external constraint on the use of time in lower chambers, the centralization of agenda control (internal) and the need to factor in debates and decisions of an upper chamber in the use of time (external). This allows us to determine whether or not there is a privileged subgroup among legislators and whether a legislature is the “master of its time” (see Patzelt, 2009, 253).

Since any analysis of time in legislatures only makes sense if we also analyze legislatures in time, we also need to adopt a long-term perspective. Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany, and Sweden can be regarded as most different

cases, which also allow for long-term analyses. Such an analysis should start once all potential origins of time pressure are present, that is, the requirement of legislatures' consent to all legislation, at least near-universal male suffrage, and democratic responsibility of presidents (in France, the United States, and Germany between 1919–1933) or prime ministers (in Great Britain, France, Germany since 1949, and Sweden since 1919). Because universal suffrage was only introduced in Sweden in 1920, our analysis starts in 1921.

Figure 6.1 shows the temporal development of the lower chambers of the five countries. Only two of the five chambers have remained within the same quadrant since 1921. The British House of Commons has operated under centralized agenda control since 1902 and is able to overrule the upper chamber, the House of Lords, since 1911. Similarly, the US House of Representatives has also privileged the majority internally since 1883 but shares lawmaking powers with the Senate. The three other chambers have changed their temporalities since 1921, most fundamentally in the French case during the transition from the Third to the Fourth Republic. The symbols in Figure 6.1 depict the procedural ideal types. As expected, most legislatures had already departed from the legislative state of nature (*) in 1921. If this was not the case, as in the German Reichstag of the Weimar Republic, this posed a considerable danger for legislative democracy because legislative efficiency can easily be jeopardized (see Koß, 2018, 180–188). As for the procedural ideal types, working legislatures (†) clearly dominate over talking ones (‡) and hybrids (§) are confined to (semi)presidential systems.

In order to assess the impact of acceleration, we analyze the bills passed per plenary sitting in five-year intervals¹⁵ in the five lower chambers since 1921. If this number continuously grows, this could be regarded as tentative evidence for acceleration as a constraint on parliamentary action. If, on the contrary, the number of bills varies or even

		<i>Majority privileges present in allocation of time?</i>	
		–	+
<i>Need to factor in upper chamber with respect to allocation of time?</i>	–	Reichstag, 1921–33(*) National Assembly, 1944–58(†) Riksdag, 1971–(†)	House of Commons, 1921–(‡) National Assembly, 1958–2009 (‡), 2009–(§)
	+	Riksdag, 1921–70(†) Bundestag, 1949–† Chamber of Deputies, 1921–40†	House of Representatives, 1921– (§)

FIGURE 6.1: Time in legislatures and legislatures in time: The lower chambers of Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany, and Sweden since 1921.

Notes: (*) Legislative state of nature; (†) Working legislatures; (‡) Talking legislatures; (§) Hybrid legislatures.

decreases, this rather suggests that legislators are able to cope with (alleged) acceleration by successfully applying time strategies.

Figure 6.2 illustrates that cycles characterize the development of bills passed per sitting rather than any linear development. If at all, the general trend is toward a decrease in the number of bills passed. In general, these cycles seem to be affected by external events, most notably both World Wars (to which legislatures often responded with increased legislative activity). However, there is no universal trend toward an ever-increasing level of lawmaking. The cyclical nature of legislative activity is most visible in the House of Representatives. Here, biannual elections lead to a substantially higher number of bills passed in election years.¹⁶ Since elections always take place in even years, five-year intervals such as 1926–1930 (with three elections) always show higher numbers of bills passed than intervals such as 1931–1935 (with only two elections). Overall, the evidence provided in Figure 6.2 suggests that time pressure is more of an endogenous opportunity than an exogenous constraint (see Goetz, 2012, 704). External shocks clearly matter, but internal strategies seem to explain more of the variation observable.

Figure 6.2 also suggests some more trends that, just like the overall finding, warrant further empirical analysis. For instance, the centralization of agenda control seems to constrain legislative activity in talking legislatures like the House of Commons (see Döring, 2001; Döring and Hallerberg, 2004), but less so in hybrid ones like the French National Assembly (since 1958) and the US House of Representatives. However, a look at the trend for the French legislatures illustrates that the 1958 constitutional reform reached its goal to reduce the legislative inflation of the working legislatures of the Third and Fourth Republic. Just as the centralization of agenda control in talking legislatures leads to lower levels of legislative activity, powerful committees in working and hybrid ones increase the number of bills passed per sitting. This suggests that powerful committees indeed temporally segment legislatures. The early peaks of legislative activity in the House of Representatives most likely reflect the very early institutionalization of a system of powerful committee in the 1820s whose expansion was complete by 1920 (Schickler, 2011).

The development of legislative activity in the Swedish Riksdag suggests that upper chambers have similar effects as powerful committees because they allow for more legislative efficiency. After the Riksdag became unicameral in 1971, the number of bills passed per sitting clearly dropped and only reached a new peak during the recession of the early 1990s (which suggests that external shocks also affect the cyclic nature of legislative activity). Furthermore, the French example suggests that the centralization of agenda control has a more substantial impact on legislative activity than the limitation of sitting days: here, the extension of sittings from 90 to 120 in 1995 had no visible impact on the number of bills passed per sitting.

Finally, the recent decrease in legislative activity in all legislatures may well reflect the growing level of ideological polarization and the rise of populist parties (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). However, this and all other trends visible in the number of bills passed per sitting in the legislatures of Great Britain, France, the United States, Germany, and Sweden warrants further empirical analysis. With this caveat in mind,

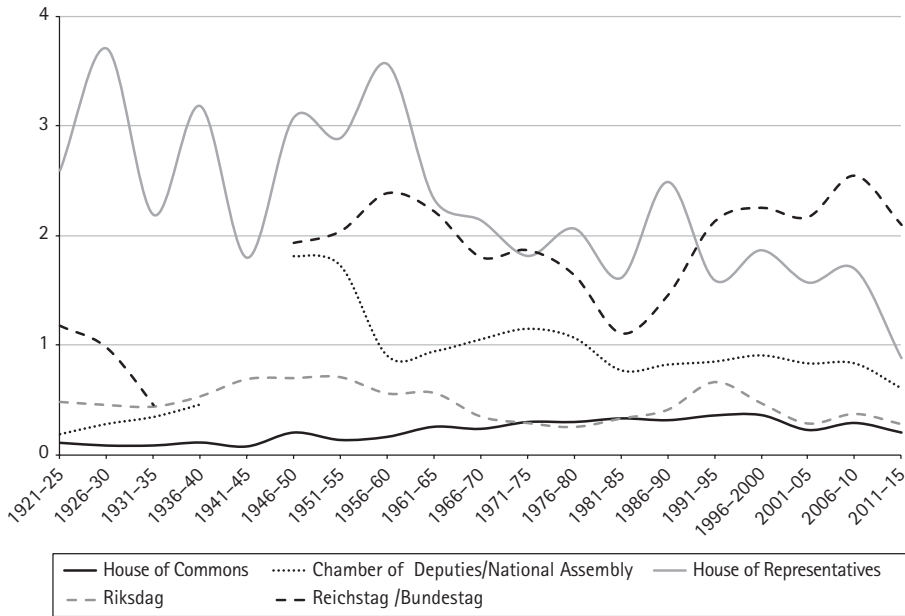


FIGURE 6.2: Average number of bills passed per plenary sitting in four legislatures, 1921–2015.

Notes: numbers for the House of Representatives refer to public laws. No data for Chamber of Deputies 1941–1945 (German occupation) and Reichstag 1936–1948 (breakdown of legislative democracy).

Sources: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/> (House of Commons, 1921–1998); <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga> (House of Commons, 1998–2015); <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb328020951/date.item> (Chamber of Deputies, 1912–1940); <http://4e.republique.jo-an.fr/> (National Assembly, 1946–1958); <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/> (National Assembly, 1958–2015); <https://history.house.gov/Institution/House-Calendars/House-Calendars/> (House of Representatives, 1921–2015); Annexes to Second Chamber proceedings (Riksdag, 1921–1970); <http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/> (Riksdag, 1971–2015); www.reichstagsprotokolle.de (Reichstag, 1921–1933); <http://pdok.bundestag.de> (Bundestag, 1949–2015).

we can tentatively conclude that the evidence presented here suggests that the alleged macrotrend of an ever-increased acceleration does not lead to increased legislative activity.

STRETCH OUT AND WAIT: HOW TO FURTHER STUDY TIME IN LEGISLATURES

Irrespective of all scholarly disputes, there is far-reaching consensus that legislatures are particularly sensitive to time problems. Especially with respect to lawmaking, the plenary bottleneck of legislatures renders these the temporally most vulnerable political institution. Subject to dispute is, however, whether these time problems primarily go back to external or internal changes. This distinction has substantial consequences because external constraints—due to, most notably, acceleration—turn legislators into passive

takers of temporal changes, whereas internal origins allow for more agency, rendering the emergence of time strategies to cope with acceleration more likely.

This chapter argued that legislators seemingly continue to be masters of their own time. Time rules and time budgets still serve as mechanisms collectively enabling legislators to identify shared understandings of their political tasks which allows them to fulfill these (Dreischer, 2009; Patzelt, 2009). Institutional (and behavioral) solutions to time problems exist. Not even the creation of temporal privileges for majorities simply implies that opposition power is minimized. What is more, the empirical evidence available does not suggest that legislatures' workload is subject to unidirectional acceleration. Rather, legislative activity is probably as much informed by external constraints as by internal preferences of legislators.

In order to assess the time problem in legislatures and possible coping strategies more thoroughly, three strands of future research seem particularly promising. First, we need more systematic analyses of the question of whether different time rules consistently affect not only time budgets of parliamentary actors but also the relative and absolute shares of time devoted to different parliamentary activities. Second, and related to this, we still lack a comprehensive appraisal of the (temporal) power of oppositions. The literature contains a number of insightful ideas on how oppositions could get their will even under pure majority rule, but these ideas are not yet integrated with each other and warrant an adoption to a large(r) number of cases. Thirdly, future research should also try to identify which activities and proposals (if any) no parliamentary time is available for. This would then allow us to assess in more detail to which extent parliamentary time is a scarce resource and whether (alleged) acceleration is an external constraint or an internal opportunity for legislators.

NOTES

1. As this chapter deals with both parliamentary and presidential systems, the term "legislature" is preferred here over "parliament." A "legislature" whose consent is required for all legislation to become effective is conceived of as the basic concept of which both parliaments (which are able to dismiss governments in parliamentary systems) and congresses (which are unable to do so in presidential systems) belong (see Kreppel, 2014).
2. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are those of the author.
3. Legislatures' external relations are covered in the chapter by Wolfgang Merkel and Andreas Schaefer (this volume).
4. See also the chapters by Petra Schleiter; and Linda Gonçalves Veiga, Georgios Efthymoulou, and Atsuyoshi Morozumi (this volume).
5. Scheuerman (2001, 56) defends basing theories of acceleration on early modern political theories by arguing that the values classic authors endorse are all but outdated: "the contrast between a deliberate legislature and expeditious executive, the notion that law should be prospective and stable along with the closely related view of constitutions as entailing long-term commitments, as well as the assumption of the reversibility of majority decisions remain important features of the liberal-democrat world-view."

6. See the chapter by William E. Scheuerman (this volume).
7. This subsection is based on Koß (2018, 18–24).
8. Cox and McCubbins (2011) only differentiate between the power to table a particular proposal (which they refer to as positive agenda control) and to prevent a proposal from being tabled (negative agenda control in their diction). However, even if actors cannot table proposals, they might well be able to amend them once they are discussed. What is more, tabling proposals does not necessarily mean these are passed. Before decisions are made, the debate needs to be closed. This is why agenda control can best be conceived of as three-dimensional.
9. The synchronization of presidential and legislative elections in France in 2000 exemplifies this difference. From a temporal perspective, this implied a shift toward a more parliamentary logic of the French political system in which the president became an elected prime minister. However, the nonparliamentary logic of the French system remained intact since early dissolutions of the National Assembly—which remain possible—would render the synchronization obsolete.
10. Even though it was only in 2011 that the British monarch (on request of the prime minister) lost the right to dissolve the House of Commons—remarkably, in the wake of the creation of the first full-fledged coalition government in the United Kingdom.
11. A special case was the bicameral Swedish legislature. Up to the creation of a unicameral system in 1971, both chambers possessed virtually equal rights, especially with respect to legislation. To allow for the simultaneous reading of bills in both chambers, legislators from both chambers were equally represented on committees that effectively served as coordination devices between both chambers.
12. One of the proponents of such a theory, Rosa (2005, 415), also refers to the outsourcing of decisions to constitutional courts, markets, and citizens' individual responsibility.
13. This paragraph builds on Koß (2018, 28).
14. The most notable exception is scholarship on the US Congress (see Binder, 1997; Dion, 1997; Schickler, 2001).
15. On the merits of displaying long-term developments in five-year intervals see Caramani (2004, 81).
16. This trend is also visible in legislatures with staggered memberships (Willumsen et al., 2018) and implies that the US Senate with its biannual election of a third of all senators also constraints the House externally.

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CHAPTER 7

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

Four Temporalities

STEPHEN SKOWRONEK

INSTITUTIONS construct time, each according to its own purposes and organization. That means that activity in complex institutional settings runs in intercurrent streams and that the rhythms of change are contrapuntal. These effects register in all institutional interactions, but they are especially pronounced in government. Political institutions characteristically reach beyond their own boundaries to realize their objectives, so they are constantly impinging upon other institutions and on people out of doors.¹ The institutional construction of time affects political agency directly as a feature of incumbency and indirectly as a feature of the objects those agents target for change.

William E. Scheuerman's chapter in this volume offers a vivid depiction of the intercurrent construction of time in government. There the principal institutions are distinguished generically, each with its own time horizon. The judiciary looks backward to protect rights; the legislature is face-forward and deliberative in promulgation of policy; the executive is immediate and impatient, fixated on the fierce urgency of now. Scheuerman's illustrative references to the American Constitution are apt as well, both for their historical resonance and for their insights into the Constitution-stripping implications of the rise of presidentialism.² The newfound priority of the immediate in contemporary American government has been made plain by leaders across the political spectrum. It was expressed by Barack Obama in a defense of unilateral action: "We can't wait for Congress to do its job, so where they won't act, I will" (Pfeiffer, 2011). It was voiced by Donald Trump in calls to abolish the filibuster in the Senate and in open hostility to adverse rulings from the courts (Carney, 2018).

But the American case is illustrative of more than general attributes and tendencies. When Obama launched his "we can't wait" initiative, he had just suffered a resounding defeat in midterm elections. His party lost control of the House of Representatives, and governmental action on his legislative agenda was effectively stymied. After Trump's

midterm reversals, the House of Representatives moved toward impeachment proceedings, and the president shelved expressions of impatience with the supermajority rules of the Senate. Indeed, he began raising objections to precipitous action by Congress, and he turned to the courts in an effort to slow things down. If the American Constitution holds any *special* interest when thinking about the institutional construction of time, it is because it is a written frame that has been continuously operative for some 230 years. The relationships stipulated in that document give rise to a specific set of temporalities, rhythms of change that are distinctive among modern states. Trends are affected by intercurrent relationships that are engrained within and improvised around a structure that has been carried forward from the eighteenth century. As a timepiece, the American Constitution is most interesting in its nuts and bolts. Whatever might be emergent in American politics is likely to be shaped by what has been persistent and by what has recurred.

My previous work on the politics of leadership in the American presidency has lighted on temporalities tied to these stubborn, abrasive, multitiered interactions (Skowronek, 1997, 2020). As I see them, presidents are time-bound agents of change, probing for breaks in a complex institutional setting. In this essay, I will distinguish what seem to me to be the four main temporalities of political leadership in the American presidency: term, succession, sequence, and thickening. Each registers time a bit differently, and each in its own way authorizes and constrains the interventions of incumbents. The political impact of presidential leadership in America is thoroughly caught up in these interactive effects.

Cast in general terms, these four temporalities should suggest counterparts in other national settings. But as each is constructed by interactions among particular institutions, they are likely to vary widely in their national manifestations. For instance, national political leadership in the United States displays none of the complications of a higher-order overlay of institutions, as European leaders face from the European Union. American presidents are, however, caught up in quite intricate webs, and in moving from one institutional frame to the next, my discussion widens the political stakes of their interactions. At issue are the ways in which these four temporalities, singly and in combination, construct presidential agency and respond to presidential leadership. I will conclude with a look at the current moment, examining the temporal construction of the leadership of President Donald Trump.

TERM

The temporal construction of political leadership in the United States is anchored in an institutional arrangement that was constitutionally ordained in 1789. Article II of the American Constitution gives the president “the executive power” for a term of four years. Tenure is fixed by the calendar, with presidential elections held regularly on a set date. By early convention, and later (after Franklin Roosevelt broke with convention)

by constitutional amendment, incumbents are limited to a maximum of two terms. The president and the vice president are the only officers elected by the nation as a whole, and presidents are now held responsible for the course of national affairs during their tenure. But because they are selected separately from the officers in the other branches of American government, the cooperation and coordination essential to their success is hard to achieve. Each branch of government works within its own time horizon: two-year representatives (selected all at once) in the lower house of the Congress; six-year senators (selected one-third at a time in staggered two-year cycles) in the upper house; lifetime appointment for judges (selected one-by-one through presidential nomination and Senate confirmation).

The preset provisions of the constitutional time machine create a layered, incurrent politics. The original rationale for these staggered terms and disjoint operations was to slow the pace of change, to minimize the disruptions of electoral politics, and to stabilize the affairs of state. In raising impediments to concerted action across institutions, the framers were reacting to the politics of post-Revolutionary America wherein unbridled, impulsive majorities in the several state legislatures appeared a threat to liberty and property and where legislative supremacy itself had succumbed to spontaneous gatherings of the people proclaiming their own sovereignty (Wood, 1998). Fearing that the United States was following the grim history of earlier republics, the framers sought to secure the characteristic virtues of representative government while arresting its tendency to degenerate over time into mob rule. Rather than revert to executive supremacy, their Constitution created three “coordinate” branches that would have to vie with one another to get anything done. This new “science of politics” contemplated a timeless balance of competing power centers, one that would protect established authority and promote a steady administration of the laws.

Although the Constitution’s newly empowered chief executive provided for quick and decisive action in emergencies, it is hard to draw any clear conception of the president as a national political leader from the formal construction of the office. Provisions for political mobilization and programmatic activism were weak, to say the least. The Constitution contemplated an executive manager, not a political agitator. The president was the “chief magistrate” (Hamilton, 1788a), charged to enforce the law and to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.”³ Election was indirect, the selection of the president placed in the hands of an intermediate body of local electors without provision for their coordination nationwide. This detached the office even further from particular interests and programmatic mandates. The president was given a veto over national legislation, but that was meant to tamp down the programmatic ambitions of the representative assembly and to protect executive independence, not to foster executive direction or agenda setting. The closest the constitutional job description came to political leadership were certain managerial provisions allowing presidents to call Congress into special session as events might demand and, “from time to time,” to recommend to Congress measures thought “necessary and expedient.”⁴

For all their efforts to stave off political agitation at the top, the framers of the Constitution introduced profound uncertainty into the relationship between popular

will as expressed in national elections and the protection of established authority. Those interested in change quickly identified the president—a nationally elected officer standing at the intersection between the production and implementation of legislation—as the most promising focal point for their political demands. The redeployment of the presidency as a position of national political leadership occurred in stages, beginning informally with committees of correspondence among local elites who coordinated political support behind a national candidate. The Twelfth Amendment (1804) facilitated party organizations and mobilization on a national election ticket. The early parties were organizations of state-based political machines that periodically gathered in national conventions to nominate candidates for the presidency and to campaign on a shared platform. Presidential leadership got an additional boost on the eve of the New Deal from the Twentieth Amendment (1933), which brought the executive and legislative calendars into closer alignment. From then on, the presidential term would commence closer to the election, with campaign promises still fresh in mind, and it would coincide with the beginning of a new Congress, inviting freshly elected presidents to set the order of business. Then came “presidential parties,” the candidate-centered organizations of today. Presidential candidates now openly contest party nominations in primary elections; they forge their own coalitions of interests in policy, build their own organizations, and appeal to the people directly with their own agendas.

These changes have altered the entire national government. They grafted a political ideal of “transformational” action by the president onto an office that originally contemplated national stewardship from a position above the political fray. Latter-day reformers promoted presidential leadership as “the work of the people *breaking through* the Constitutional form” (Ford, 1898, 56), and much of our modern history has been working through that conundrum. It has never been entirely clear how the official responsibilities of the office for managing the executive branch and carrying out the will of the other branches were to be reconciled with new provisions for mobilizing a coalition of intense policy demanders around the presidential party and lodging legislative initiative in the executive. Nor was it apparent how the enhanced political profile of presidents would bear on the disjoint temporal construction of the other institutions these officers were now charged to lead. As new expectations have competed ever-more directly with those anchored in the constitutional text, these uncertainties have been magnified. The resulting collocations now punctuate the presidential term.

One familiar inflection point of “term time” is the “100 days.”⁵ A marker first set during the New Deal, the 100 days initially referred to the flood of actions combating the Great Depression that attended Franklin Roosevelt’s first three months in office. It has since become a regular standard of political judgment, indicating the capacities of new incumbents to tap the mobilizing energy of their election victory, to seize control of the nation’s agenda, and to redirect the affairs of state. The idea is closely related to the expectation of a “honeymoon period” during which Congress, cognizant of the will of the people recently expressed in the national election, is most likely to indulge the president’s political interests and policy priorities. As both of these expressions indicate, the timespan of presidential advantage in political leadership is, as a rule, severely

compressed, and it is expected to fade quickly. Accordingly, the political imperative for any new administration is to “hit the ground running” (Horsley, 2017). When it comes to programmatic ambition, the first law of presidential leadership is “move it or lose it” (Light, 1982, 218).

An officer originally counted upon to slow down the lawmaking process, the president now agitates to speed it up, taking decisive action immediately upon taking office. Countermobilization by the president’s opponents and stiffening resistance to presidential initiative are typically registered in the congressional “midterm” elections, which tend to weaken the president’s political hand. Obama’s “we can’t wait” tour, taken in the wake of the political “shellacking” delivered by his first midterm (Halloran 2010), expressed stalwart defiance of that all-too-familiar pattern, but the fundamentals were not so easily finessed. The run-up to the re-election campaign dominates the second half of a president’s first term, with the incumbent typically in a weakened state and facing a referendum on his performance. In the wake of Trump’s midterm setbacks, the new majority in the House of Representatives debated how best to capitalize on their new-found momentum: the critical question was whether pressing their case for impeachment would promote or compromise their recently enhanced prospects for ousting the president electorally.

If successful in re-election, the president faces the strange dynamics of the second term. Even as he stands at his second inaugural vindicated by the people for his leadership, term limits instantly transform him into a “lame duck.” Politically, the second term is an accelerating scramble over the succession, one that generally stiffens resistance to presidential direction from friend and foe alike. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pointedly truncated presidential authority in the spring of 2016 when he refused even to consider Obama’s nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court. The argument for denying Obama a basic prerogative of his office was that it was too late to make an appointment of such lasting significance, that a sitting president should not wield that authority in a presidential election year.

The dynamics of the presidential term have been distilled into two competing patterns by political scientist Paul Light (1982, 60–61). First, Light identifies a cycle of declining influence as the president’s political power dissipates over the course of the term and as resistance to presidential direction mounts. Second, he finds a cycle of increasing effectiveness as incumbents learn on the job how the government works and what kinds of changes might actually prove effective. A dismal temporal logic to the presidential term may be discerned in the interaction of these two patterns: incumbents are most influential in getting what they want at the start, when they are least knowledgeable about how to do things and thus most likely to make big mistakes; as they learn more about how to chart a responsible and effective course forward, they tend to lose the political influence necessary to work their will.

The one bright spot in Light’s otherwise bleak appraisal appears at the opening of a second term. Presumably, re-elected presidents will have both the knowledge to act constructively and some added clout from their recent victory to get the job done. In this regard, consider the course of the “Reagan Revolution.” President Reagan’s sharp break

with received priorities came in the opening months of his first term, in the budget and tax initiatives taken in 1981. Under pressure from a personal appeal by the president to the public, Congress set aside its reservations about the president's plan and enacted the priorities of his newly mobilized conservative insurgency. Shortly thereafter, the president's budget director admitted that he had fabricated the numbers behind the plan under the pressures of the moment, and in the sharp economic downturn that followed, the president lost all credibility in matters of fiscal policy. Subsequent Reagan budgets were all declared "dead on arrival" (Reagan, [1992] 2003, 827). Gradually, the administration changed course, supporting a string of tax increases compensating for the steep cuts enacted by the "revolution." Prospects for management improved as the pressures of mobilization eased, and serious interbranch negotiations early in the second term yielded a major achievement, the most extensive overhaul of the tax code in 70 years.

SUCCESSION

By stipulating the electoral calendar, the Constitution anticipates a regular and orderly transfer of power from one president to the next. It also contemplates presidents as equals, each endowed with the same "executive power." But the Constitution is strangely silent on the topic of succession. These transitions are now elaborate, resource-intensive events, recognized as such in statute and supported financially by the government. Transition planning is driven by the widening responsibilities of the presidency in government at large and by the political compulsion to "hit the ground running," enacting campaign priorities when influence is strongest. The transition process typically begins long before the inauguration of a new president, even before the presidential election, and it extends many months into the new term as the president's team gets organized and key personnel are nominated and confirmed by the Senate.⁶

At issue in the transition is the relationship between past and present. The very first transfer of presidential power tested the idea that a transition need extend no further than a substitution of the person at the top. When John Adams took over from George Washington, he found no warrant for removing Washington's cabinet advisers, and he adopted them as his own. It was only when those holdover appointees began to sabotage his directives that Adams purged them and put more dependable agents in their place. Adams learned the hard way that if he wanted to be president in the full sense of the Constitution—to exercise "the executive power" in his own right and on his own terms—he would have to cut deep against the received order of things and create an "administration" all his own (Skowronek, 1997, 66–68).

Setting up a new administration, and appointing personnel committed to its success, is now an integral and rudimentary feature of the president's job description, something prior to, and prerequisite for, national political leadership. But these actions are hardly benign, and for a founding generation that prized order and stability, their implications

were sobering. An implicit expression of concern about presidential transitions may be drawn from the Constitution's original organization of the office without term limits, for unspoken in that invitation to keep incumbents in place were fears of the inherently disruptive character of these events. So long as a sitting president periodically received the suffrages of the people, the framers found value in retaining them. Unlimited re-eligibility minimized the risks of disruption and maximized the prospects for continuity. Alexander Hamilton wrote along these lines of "the intimate connection between the duration of the executive magistrate in office and the stability of the system of administration":

To reverse and undo what has been done by a predecessor, is very often considered by a successor as the best proof he can give of his own capacity and desert; and in addition to this propensity, where the alteration has been the result of public choice, the person substituted is warranted in supposing that the dismissal of his predecessor has proceeded from a dislike of his measures; and that the less he resembles him, the more he will recommend himself to the favor of his constituents. These considerations, and the influence of personal confidences and attachments, would be likely to induce every new President to promote a change of men to fill the subordinate stations; and these causes together could not fail to occasion a disgraceful and ruinous mutability in the administration of the government.

(Hamilton, 1788b)

The force of Hamilton's concern about succession is clearly evident today. It echoes in Donald Trump's campaign promise of a "great disruption" and in his single-minded determination in office to eradicate all traces of his predecessor's legacy. The temporal construction of presidential leadership thus includes not only the regularity of presidential elections and the fixed four-year term, but also the political relationship established in the transfer of power between successor and predecessor. In that relationship, the "president," an individual constitutionally charged with "the executive power," competes with the "presidency," an institution constitutionally charged to "take care that the laws are faithfully executed" and responsible on that basis for upholding and protecting the commitments of the government as a whole. In both program and personnel, the executive branch accumulates commitments and carries them forward, and those commitments cannot but impinge on the efforts of a new chief executive to create his own administration. Following this logic, the implications of a presidential transition are such that if a new chief executive really wanted to exercise the powers of his office in his own right and on his own terms, he would have to reconstruct the government wholesale. Of course, very few even come close to doing that. In one way or another, past and present are left to contend within each presidency, and the transformative potential of presidential leadership trades off against the trustworthiness of commitments the government has already made.

John Adams's initial decision to take Washington's administration as his own involved more than just respect for high officers of state who seemed to be performing

their duties adequately, and more than some abstract concern for stability. Adams came to power in a closely contested election. He was arrayed politically against Thomas Jefferson, who had become the leading opponent of the policies of the Washington administration. Adams was, if only as a practical matter, politically dependent on partisan and institutional alliances forged behind those policies. Independent action in office risked his political isolation. Harboring qualms of his own about received policies and personnel, Adams nonetheless felt boxed in. "I knew that it would turn the world upside down if I removed any one of them," he said of Washington's men (Adams, [1812] 1966, 232). Adams was, then, not a president like every other, fully endowed with the executive power. His political affiliation with the previous administration affected all aspects of his authority, constraining his capacity to exercise the powers of his office in his own right and on his own terms. Predictably, when Adams did finally purge his cabinet—when he took charge of policy in his own right and created an administration all his own—the political foundations of his presidency cratered. The aggrieved interests within his ranks sabotaged his re-election effort, and he went down in defeat (Skowronek, 1997, 68).

Political affiliation with the policies and priorities of a predecessor is not uncommon among successors, and Adams's experience is indicative of the complications such a temporal connection introduces into the incumbent's political leadership. Connections of this sort make it harder to sustain the inherently disruptive political effects of the exercise of executive power. Like all other presidents, affiliated leaders are held responsible for the state of the nation during their tenure, but in taking charge and trying to keep things in tune with the times, they are characteristically torn between orthodoxy and innovation. Their political authority rests on a promise of continuity, and when they propose timely adaptations or changes in course, they open themselves up to charges of betrayal from those upon whom they rely for support. Consider the hand-off of power from Ronald Reagan to his politically affiliated successor, George H. W. Bush. Bush was plagued by doubts among his most likely followers about his fealty to the conservative orthodoxy that Reagan had stamped on the Republican Party, so much so that he felt obliged to offer an ironclad pledge of his commitment to the faith: "Read my lips: no new taxes" (Bush, 1988). Note that this was a commitment that Reagan himself had broken multiple times—and with political impunity. But when Bush broke it in the budget compromise of 1990, he sent his administration into a political tailspin from which it never recovered. No matter that the budget deal was a reasoned response to an immediate problem, that it was a serious and effective deficit-reduction plan, that it proved Bush's greatest domestic achievement; he did not have the political authority to carry his base forward in support of a position he could call his own.

There are any number of ways in which affiliated presidents can try to finesse the conundrum of orthodox innovation, but the condition is structural, built into the temporal frame of their leadership position. Time and again, affiliation has defied the most skillful politicians. Even when acting dutifully to redeem the unfilled promises on the received agenda, the affiliated leader is providing a personal rendition of what the party orthodoxy anticipates, requires, and allows. As Lyndon Johnson discovered when Bobby Kennedy began to criticize his implementation of an agenda inherited

from President John Kennedy, affiliated presidents have little to say in response to those among the faithful who might see matters differently and who have the authority to say that the incumbent got it wrong. The more vigorously these presidents exercise the independent powers of their office—the more they make the office their own—the more deeply they drive factionalism within their own ranks.

The experience of Thomas Jefferson, the political beneficiary of John Adams's schismatic impact, tells the other side of the story. As the leader of the opposition to established priorities, and the first president to bring a new party into control of the national government, Jefferson led what he called "the Revolution of 1800" (Jefferson, 1819). The temporal structure of opposition leadership is more consistent with the personal exercise of presidential power. Rising to office on an expression of discontent with the previously established order of things, opposition leaders are not compromised by the inherently disruptive effect of their powers or of actions creating a wholly "new administration." Coming to power with the political authority to distance themselves from their inheritance, they have more leeway in exercising the constitutional powers of their office and in interpreting their mandate going forward. Indeed, supporters depend on these leaders to use their power to alter government and policy in a way that will help them secure their own hold on the future.

Unlike affiliated leaders, opposition leaders have demonstrated their staying power through extreme adversity. Ronald Reagan survived the severe economic recession of his first term; Franklin Roosevelt was elected four times, serving through an extended economic depression and world war; Thomas Jefferson went virtually unchallenged until the last days of his second term, and, notwithstanding his long, steadfast adherence to an economically disastrous policy of embargoing foreign trade, he passed power to a hand-picked successor. Both Bill Clinton and Barack Obama opposed the conservative frame Ronald Reagan had stamped on American government, and both were re-elected despite devastating midterm elections demonstrating the resilience and resurgence of that conservative orthodoxy. Every president who has come to power from the opposition to a previously established orthodoxy (and who did not die before his first term was over) has been re-elected to a second term. Affiliated presidents, in contrast, are often one-termers. In fact, every president who has voluntarily withdrawn rather than fight for re-election has been an affiliated leader.

SEQUENCE

The framers' proposition—that a proper arrangement of institutions could arrest the political degeneration historically associated with republics and sustain a timeless balance of power—has proven half right. On the one hand, the American republic has persevered and is now the oldest in the world; on the other, political degeneration has become a recurrent feature. Constitutional arrangements that prioritize stability, protect established authority, and hold onto received commitments mediate and

complicate regular adjustments to changing times. As a consequence, American government is often awkwardly aligned with conditions in the nation at large. The effect over the long haul is reflected in extended sequences of political change. Cycles of degeneration and reconstruction typically reach across decades, a tenacious new ordering of political priorities decaying gradually before giving way in another sudden implosion and wrenching reconstruction. In effect, the temporal curse of republics has been ameliorated in America by becoming institutionalized.

The presidents who stand out as the greatest political leaders to hold the office—Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan—are the ones who reset the clock. These are not a random group of incumbents distinguished by some uncanny skill in the exercise of power. On the contrary, they all came to power at a similar moment in “political time.”⁷ In other words, greatness in political leadership is in no small measure a temporal construction. It is not just that these were all opposition leaders; more than most opposition leaders, they were also great repudiators, leaders who could in the course of events claim extraordinary authority to move against the received order directly as failed and bankrupt of any real solutions to the problems of the day. All of them led new political movements to power; each routed a long-dominant coalition in government, and each acted in office to reorder things—sweeping aside long-established governing arrangements and setting new foundations. Each transformed the regime, resetting the terms and conditions of legitimate national government.

Once in office, these great repudiators undertook similar initiatives aimed at reconstruction. Their leadership targeted the institutional infrastructure of the old order, or what we now have come to call “the deep state.” Bank wars, civil wars, and court battles served to undermine, if not dismantle outright, the governmental arrangements that supported the politics of the past. Characteristically as well, these leaders were all party builders. They forged new electoral coalitions unanticipated in prior political alliances, they developed alternative institutional arrangements to secure that coalition’s dominance, and they reset the nation’s political priorities accordingly. These presidents stand out as the transformational leaders in the American presidency, and, not coincidentally, they are the ones who exercised “the executive power” most fully in their own right and on their own terms. Presidential power is expressed most clearly in the most thoroughgoing breaks with the past.

Americans dub these moments “revolutions,” “rebirths,” “new deals,” “new beginnings.” Through forceful repudiation and institutional reconstruction, each of these leaders became a “first.” This contingent authority to reset the clock, to install a new and durable set of governing commitments, has served as an American surrogate for the real revolutions observed in other countries. It is a means of renewal that does not replace the Constitution altogether. The paradox of a “revolution” spearheaded by a head of state who is constitutionally sworn “to preserve, protect and defend” is resolved rhetorically, in tropes that link the wholesale repudiation of received arrangements to an affirmation of essential values allegedly lost or squandered in the indulgences of the received order. The reconstructive stance in the American presidency turns on a jeremiad

in which order-shattering actions become order-saving, the destruction of what exists an affirmation of fundamental principles rightly understood. That is the sentiment that catapulted Lincoln to national leadership. In his renunciation of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise (a measure that had restricted the spread of slavery), he defined the Republican Party as a reconstructive movement: "Our republican robe is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. . . . If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving" (Lincoln, [1854] 2012, 85–86).

The reorderings spun out through this leadership stance have staying power. Presidents long afterward feel compelled to defer to the new terms and conditions sets at these breakpoints. The reconstructive presidents leave their imprint on the political, institutional, and ideological character of an entire age. That is reflected in the common organization of American political history into a Jeffersonian "era" (1800–1828), a Jacksonian era (1828–1860), a Republican era (1865–1932), a New Deal or liberal era (1932–1980), and a Reagan or conservative era (1980–).

Note that affiliation and opposition, described earlier as a simple relationship of successors to their immediate predecessors, take on added dimension in this light. These terms refer also, and more critically, to the incumbent's political relationship to the previous reconstruction. Presidents like John Kennedy and George W. Bush, both of whom came from a party opposed to that of their immediate predecessor, remained in an important sense "affiliated" leaders. Each was an orthodox innovator—Kennedy tied to a liberal regime inaugurated by Franklin Roosevelt; Bush to a conservative regime inaugurated by Ronald Reagan. Kennedy and Bush "restored" an ordering of priorities that their immediate predecessors never fully displaced, reaffirming the political agenda of the regime founder.

Accordingly, the temporal constructions found along these extended sequences admit of subtle gradations. Presidents intervene at various moments in the rise and decline of political regimes: construction, articulation, preemption, implosion. Moreover, by exercising the inherently disruptive powers of the presidency, each, by degrees, alters those regimes and drives the sequences characteristic of "political time." Affiliated leaders come to power on a pledge to continue, adjust, revive, or complete the work of the reconstructive leader. As indicated earlier, affiliated leadership is handicapped in the exercise of authority by their allies' perceptions of orthodoxy and what it entails, and the disruptive effect of leadership in such circumstances is characteristically schismatic. James Polk at once enacted the agenda of the Jacksonian Democrats and plunged the Jackson coalition into factionalism. Lyndon Johnson produced the same effect in enacting the agenda of the liberal regime. With each new iteration of affiliated leadership, support for the established regime becomes more internally contentious and the political position of the affiliated leader more precarious. The common agenda grows more obscure and distended. Late-regime affiliates find themselves in especially difficult straits. Not only do they bear the burdens of prior schisms, but they contend with changes in the nation at large that strain the relevance of the old priorities to the new

problems of the day. Disjunctive break points tend to come on the heels of hapless floundering by late-regime affiliates.

All along the way, opposition leaders can capitalize on the schismatic effects of regime affiliates, gaining election to the presidency even when the received order still enjoys broad support as a set of solutions to the nation's problems. Bill Clinton, the first opposition leader elected after the Reagan Revolution, came to power in such circumstances. So too did Dwight Eisenhower, the first opposition leader elected after the New Deal reconstruction. Neither Clinton nor Eisenhower repudiated the received order outright. In fact, Eisenhower ended up extending liberal commitments, most notably on Social Security, and Clinton's achievements in the areas of crime control, budget balancing, trade, and welfare retrenchment reflected conservative priorities more than liberal ones. Though they lacked the authority to repudiate received priorities outright, these presidents retained the independence in action that came with their opposition stance. They proved masterful at "triangulation." They offered hybrid, "third way" agendas and created mongrel political identities with broad, if momentary, appeal.

In later iterations, as the opportunities for affiliated leadership grow more tenuous, the opportunities for opposition leadership tend to expand. As the establishment grows more factionalized and its agenda more vulnerable, the received order becomes more susceptible to direct attack. This pattern of progressively stronger expressions of opposition leadership can be observed from case to case in each sequence: in the Republican era, it is found among Democrats—from Grover Cleveland, to Woodrow Wilson, to Franklin Roosevelt. In the liberal era, it is found among conservatives—from Dwight Eisenhower, to Richard Nixon, to Ronald Reagan. Thus far in the conservative era, we have seen something similar. In 2008, during his primary election contest with Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama called upon Democrats to push beyond the example set by the previous Democratic president, Bill Clinton. Obama disavowed Bill Clinton's trimming style of leadership and said that Democrats should take their model instead from Ronald Reagan. Rather than "triangulating" in the manner of the Clinton presidency—splitting the difference between conservatism and progressivism—Obama thought that a Democratic president should strive to do for progressivism what Reagan did for conservatism: "change the trajectory" of national affairs and transform its politics (Obama, 2008). In more recent years, the radicalization of the progressive critique of the conservative regime has proceeded apace, now casting Obama's positions as middling.

Affiliated leaders and opposition leaders push and pull at the established regime, driving the American polity as a whole toward its characteristic flashpoints of implosion and reconstruction. The pivotal events are characteristically two-sided. First, a late regime affiliate struggling desperately to adapt the old order to a new time exposes through his own haplessness a regime beyond repair. These presidents instigate a nationwide crisis of legitimacy, opening the door to an opposition leader who can then, finally and forthrightly, repudiate the old order outright as a failed project, bankrupt of solutions to the new problems of the day. These opposition leaders bring a new coalition of interests to power, one united in its disillusionment with the received order of things, and the newly elected president proceeds to dismantle and replace the old order with an

alternative more serviceable to those interests thrust into power. From these patterns emerge the curiously stark couplings of leadership efforts in American presidential history: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, James Buchanan and Abraham Lincoln, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. In one moment, we find an apparent incompetent; in the next, an exemplary master of the leadership arts. The first president in each pair is a late-regime affiliate, without firm allies, seemingly out of his depth, and unable to get out of his own way; the second, an opposition leader with an expansive warrant to repudiate and reconstruct. The secret to breakthrough leadership in the American presidency lies in the sequence; mastery is dependent on clear demonstration in the prior moment that the received order is beyond repair.

THICKENING

In “political time,” prospects for leadership change from one incumbent to the next as each reacts to what has come before and alters through his own interventions the political regime over which he presides. Patterns are revealed in cross-period comparisons, with counterparts for each effort found among presidents of earlier times who intervened at similar moments in a sequence of regime change. These linkages tell a characteristically American story about national political leadership. They do not, however, tell the whole story. As is plain to see, modern American government is a vastly different operation from early American government. The outstanding question is how the characteristic rhythms of political time have been affected by secular changes in state and society.

“Secular time” tells of the forward course of institutionalization as it has gradually thickened the political universe of presidential action. Social, economic, and cultural interests have grown progressively more interdependent in their bearing and more national in their expression. The federal government has expanded exponentially to manage the problems that attend this burgeoning of commitments, expectations, and responsibilities. Scholars now distinguish “the modern presidency” from the traditional presidency on this basis, with incumbents after the New Deal set apart as inhabitants of an office that is very different in its organization and operation than it was in earlier times (Greenstein, 1979).

With the development of the modern presidency, executive power has become more thoroughly “institutionalized,” set on foundations much broader than the incumbents themselves. Presidents are now supported by a large and well-articulated White House staff that manages their time and their exposure to others. They are surrounded further by the extensive agencies of the Executive Office of the President (EOP). The EOP provides the incumbent and the rest of the government with overhead management services. It has turned the modern presidency into “policy central”: the planning, monitoring, forecasting, coordinating hub of governmental affairs at large. These offices

are organized to ensure that problems get solved, that the system does not break down, that the demands of the moment are met, that the work of government gets done, that the institutional interests of “the presidency” are protected. Casting the president as the orchestrator of the nation’s business, facilitating the work of the whole, these offices anticipate incumbents who will act the part and serve as responsible managers of a sprawling federal bureaucracy and an unruly Congress.

Another aspect of this institutionalization is that actors throughout the system are more secure in their own positions. Ironically, as social and economic interests have become more interdependent and reliant on presidential management, the institutions of American government have become more independent of one another and safeguarded in their own authority. Congressmen and senators now build their own political organizations, and they have used the advantages of incumbency to turn representation into a political career. The bureaucracy is now “permanent,” more fully insulated though civil service protections from presidential controls previously exercised through patronage appointments and spoils rotations, and the bureaucracy has become in its own right a powerful repository of information and expertise for dealing with the complex demands of an interdependent nation. The president himself, though more responsible to all, has also become less beholden to others. As noted earlier, presidents now build political organizations of their own on their way to power. They use the personnel for these “presidential parties” to staff the White House and the upper echelons of the regular bureaucracy with personal loyalists.

These changes pull in different directions. Presidential leadership has become more “personal” in its political profile (Lowi, 1985), but the “presidency” has become more collective in its governmental profile. That makes generalization difficult. Modern presidents are, as a group, more effective at articulating their own “signature” issues and mobilizing the electorate around their own programs for change, but they are also surrounded by offices geared for prudential action and responsible management of commitments already in place. In 2018, a White House staffer published an anonymous editorial indicating inside resistance to President Trump’s “worst inclinations” and promising to uphold “stability” in the face of presidential disruptions that were seen to be threatening and inappropriate (Anonymous, 2018). The advent of the modern presidency speaks to the expanding power of the nation’s political leader but also to the operational interdependence of the government he is charged to lead.

The impact of this secular overlay is clearly marked on the leadership patterns we have observed in political time. On the one hand, opposition leaders now run up against a thickened universe of political and institutional action. The authority of even those best positioned among them to repudiate and reconstruct is hampered by greater institutional resilience in all other parts of the system. It is notable in this regard that clearest examples of reconstructive leadership are from the nineteenth century: Jackson, who forcibly dismantled the National Bank; Lincoln, who eradicated slavery. For twentieth-century exemplars of the type, breaks with inherited interests and institutions were not nearly so clean. For all that Franklin Roosevelt transformed American government, he was rebuffed in his effort to pack the Supreme Court, defeated in his effort to reorganize

the executive branch, and repelled in his party purge. The interests and institutions he sought to bend to his will set their own terms of accommodation with his new order. The Reagan Revolution proved a single jolt affair, the reordering of political priorities largely confined to first-year initiatives and to the construction of a newly dominant conservative coalition. Reagan failed to dislodge any liberal program of significance.

If opposition leaders are more constrained by this secular thickening, the effect is just the opposite for affiliated leaders. These incumbents, though disadvantaged politically, have found their leadership position bolstered by the newfound resources and expectations of the modern presidency. They are more independent politically by virtue of the rise of presidential parties, and they are more broadly grounded governmentally by virtue of the managerial tools of the modern presidency. All told, these presidents find their political affiliation less of a constraint on their ambitions and decisions. In earlier times, late-regime affiliates were defied even in setting up their own administrations. Attempting to lead in the late-Jeffersonian era, John Quincy Adams found his leadership stymied from the get-go by a political controversy surrounding his choice for secretary of state. Franklin Pierce, a late-Jacksonian affiliate, also lost control of his administration in the initial distribution of offices and quickly succumbed to the designs of the most virulent interests in his party coalition. After first compelling Pierce to endorse their wildly contentious agenda, these party leaders then discarded him as a political liability and nominated someone else to take his place. Within this comparison set, the contrast with Jimmy Carter is instructive. A late affiliate of a faltering liberal regime, Carter used all new tools of the modern presidency and nearly defied the dismal dynamics of that political situation.

Carter won the Democratic nomination in 1976 in a hostile party takeover. As a candidate in the primaries, he brazenly stigmatized his own party's establishment as out of step with the new problems of the day. He put himself forward as a political loner, one who stood apart from the stale thinking of both parties. Carter crafted his own idiosyncratic identity as national leader. He was part populist, part technocrat, beholden to no special interests, and ready to bring to the presidency the fresh thinking and managerial skills needed to make the system work. When things began to fall apart for Carter politically, he did not, like Pierce, repair to his party. Time and again, he used the resources at his disposal to assert greater independence. When Ted Kennedy, the self-appointed keeper of the party faith, pressed him to endorse comprehensive health care reform, Carter rejected the proposal on managerial grounds: it was economically irresponsible in a time of accelerating inflation. When the economy worsened, Carter appointed a new chairman to the Federal Reserve Board whose war on inflation inverted the priority of combatting unemployment enshrined in 30 years of Democratic thinking. When Kennedy challenged Carter's renomination by the party in the 1980s primaries, the president defeated him. And when, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution, American hostages were seized in Tehran, Carter changed the subject again, adopting a "Rose Garden strategy" of crisis management. He sidelined his secretary of state, huddled with his National Security Advisor, and used the staff of the National Security Council to plan a daring hostage rescue.

In the end, Carter suffered the fate of all late-regime affiliates. Secular thickening had not yet leveled the playing field for leadership. Nonetheless, it was easy to see how the overlay of secular changes might eventually wash out the leadership sequences characteristic of political time. Moreover, the outlines of a convergence might be discerned in different patterns now in view. If, on the one hand, the prospects for a wholesale reordering have dimmed and if, on the other, the constraints of affiliation have loosened, the emergent form would approximate what we have seen historically in opposition leaders presiding over resilient regimes. Leaders like Woodrow Wilson, Richard Nixon, and Barack Obama might become the new normal. Leaders like these preempt the established regime and aggressively test the prospects for reconstruction, but they are unable to follow through and resolve their disruptions in a new order. A future along that road looks rocky and rudderless, with every new president promising a transformation of his own only to fall short on the delivery.

WHAT TIME IS IT?

Abraham Lincoln put it best: “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it” (Lincoln, [1858] 2012, 126; emphases removed). For national political leaders, telling time is part of the job. Presidents intrude upon a complex set of institutional arrangements, crafting their political identities to project a certain relationship between past and present. Their authority is, in no small part, anchored in these temporal constructions, and confirming their narratives in action is critical to the maintenance of their authority.

Telling time is part of the job for political analysts as well. We can identify patterns, tie them to their respective institutional foundations, and assess the prospects of new leadership projects as they present themselves. History alerts us to the full variety of regularities, to how the different patterns discerned combine in unique configurations, and to how these crosscurrents might alter both the systemic stakes and the meaning of leadership projects going forward.

So let us bring this discussion to bear on the current moment, and unpack the temporal construction of Donald Trump’s political leadership. Four points stand out. First, there can be no mistaking how Trump himself is telling time. He rose to power on a forthright repudiation of establishment. He indicted the leadership of both of the major political parties. He declared the system “rigged,” the political class corrupt, and the entire government bankrupt of solutions to the problems of the day. He promised to “drain the swamp” and break cleanly with the old regime. His redemptive slogan—“Make America Great Again”—harkened back to some mythic past, affirming an ideal allegedly lost in the indulgences of the received order.

Trump was a political novice, but he constructed this moment with a remarkably good sense of what such a critique has entailed historically. He mobilized a movement of angry populists to attack the “deep state,” the institutional infrastructure of

the federal government. He grasped the party-building opportunity as well. Reaching out to working-class interests traditionally associated with the Democratic Party, he threatened to recast national political coalitions, to shake up the divisions between conservatives and progressives that had defined American politics since the Reagan Revolution. Trump's opponent in the general election, Hillary Clinton, boasted all the credentials allegedly needed to make the "modern presidency" work: experience in government, managerial skills, policy know-how, respect for expertise. But the Trump movement was indifferent to the trappings of modernity. Its leader was decidedly "not a policy guy." He cast himself instead as a redeemer out to reset the political clock, and, just in case anyone missed the point, he hung pictures of Andrew Jackson in prominent positions on the White House walls.

Trump's bid for leadership authority recalls a type observed repeatedly in American presidential history. Moreover, American politics is about due for one of these wrenching, reconstructive presidencies. After all, the long arm of the conservative regime has grown ever-more distended as it has stretched over the decades from its origins in the Reagan Revolution. Nonetheless, certain complications in Trump's self-presentation stand out as well, and they are equally telling.

The second point to make about Trump's leadership is that, on inspection, the sequence appears a bit off. His professed ambitions aside, Trump seems awkwardly situated for reconstructive leadership. Notwithstanding the insurgency that brought him to power, he did not land in office as the leader of a long-frustrated opposition party. On the contrary, he seized control of the dominant party of a long-established regime and restored it to power. Though this was a hostile takeover (Trump seldom even mentions Reagan's name), Trump became the nominal head of a coalition that has dominated American politics for decades. Moreover, Trump did not follow immediately upon a conspicuous display of gross incompetence in the presidency or irrefutable evidence of systemic political collapse. On the contrary, Trump's predecessor was the very model of a responsible manager of the affairs of state. Obama served two terms without any self-indicting crisis, he left office with considerable support intact, and, although his designated heir failed in her bid to succeed him, she won the popular vote by a substantial margin. Against that backdrop, Trump's virulent, unbridled critique of his inheritance strains the case for radical change with near-comic hyperbole; his invocation of the authority to repudiate has been an over-the-top caricature.

The point is that, in this sequence, Trump is an affiliated leader, and that has him trying to reconstruct the old order from within. That awkward political stance has been associated historically with late-regime affiliates. Trump clearly perceived the vulnerabilities of the establishment he now leads, but he has been hard-pressed to disregard it. His allies expect him to use his power to follow through on their priorities.

No party long in the position of privilege in American government has ever reconstructed itself while in power. On a strict reading of political time, then, this looks less like a reconstructive moment than like its immediate precursor, an implosive crisis of the old order. Trump leads the fourth incarnation of the conservative regime. Like it or not, he is saddled with what has always proven to be the impossible mission of

rejuvenating an old and faltering establishment. In political time, he would appear the Jimmy Carter of the Republican era.

Beneath the Jacksonian bluster, there is indeed a good deal about Trump's rise to power that fits the pattern of the late-regime affiliate. Recall that Carter also came to power in a hostile takeover of a long dominant party. Like Trump, Carter was from the distant fringes of the establishment he proposed to lead; like Trump, Carter was only nominally affiliated with that establishment. He too criticized his most likely allies and promised the people that he could change their ways. Both Trump and Carter were *in* but not *of* the dominant regime; they were political loners who built movements of their own without close connections to any center of political power, and, once in office, neither knew how to relate to his most likely allies in government. Both used the primary election system to craft political identities that were *sui generis* and curiously nonideological: Carter, as a technocrat and engineer ("there are no easy answers"); Trump, as the free-wheeling businessman ("The Art of the Deal"). Instead of partisan credentials, each boasted some unique acumen, some uncanny personal insight, into the regime's mounting problems and how to tackle them: Carter asked: "Why not the best?"; Trump boasted, "I alone can fix it" (Carter, 1995; Trump, 2016). The electoral appeal of the lonely, loosely connected affiliate has always been strongest when regime priorities are most distended and vulnerable and the old order most seriously in need of repair. But no sooner do leaders of this sort land in office than they appear out of their depth, their administration at sixes and sevens.

If the clock at work in presidential leadership still keeps political time—if we are, in fact, in the midst of a wrenching reconstructive turn—it seems likely that Trump is, like Carter, on the wrong side of the political pivot. The expectation for leaders nominally affiliated with vulnerable establishments is not a successful reordering but a final, decisive implosion of the dominant party of the regime under the disruptive force of presidential action. At moments like these, the institutional power of the dominant party typically proves more apparent than real, the action within it resembling nothing so much as a circular firing squad. The conspicuous failure of the Trump administration to get much out of the Republican Congress in its first 100 days, and the hapless yearlong effort of the Republicans in Congress to deliver on Trump's promise to "repeal and replace" President's Obama's healthcare program, did not bode well for a political reconstruction. Neither does the sharp rebuke to the conservative coalition during the 2018 midterm, or the president's historically low approval numbers, or the ever-present critique of the "Never Trump" conservatives (Gallup, 2019). All this is far more in keeping with the implosive political effects typical of late-regime affiliates than with the transformative effects of a successful reconstruction.

But we cannot rest the matter there. The third point about Trump's leadership scouts the complications of secular time: secular changes in the presidential office, in particular, have been loosening the constraints of affiliation and washing out the leadership patterns we observe in political time. Nothing is more apparent in Trump's leadership posture than the weakness of his affiliation with any organized collectivity. Just as Carter was far better equipped to stand his own ground than late-regime affiliates in earlier

periods, Trump is far better equipped than Carter was to define the current situation on his own terms. He may be fueling a crisis of legitimacy, but, by the same token, he has also shown just how effective a contemporary candidate can be building his own movement and infusing it with his own narrative. Now in office, Trump communicates directly and in real time with a self-styled political base, and he can rely on ideologically sympathetic media outlets to echo and reinforce his message. These resources connect him more closely with his supporters and keep them mobilized behind his every twist and turn. The presidential party seems, in this case, to have eclipsed completely the authority of the congressional party. No one in the Republican ranks has yet been able to speak with authority for the commitments the received order or call the president to account to them, as Ted Kennedy did for the Democrats under Carter. Instead of facing a credible primary challenge en route to renomination (as Carter experienced courtesy of Kennedy), Trump inspires—and threatens to support—primary challengers to Republican incumbents who fail to embrace the tenets of Trumpism. At this writing, Trump's Republican critics have either retired or fallen into line.⁸ The "Never Trump" faction harps, but it does so from the fringes, their complaints mere whispers among the legions who defer.

We shall see if Trump will go Carter one better, bucking the pattern among late-regime affiliates and muscling past the many portents of a regime implosion. But in deploying his newfound independence in action and pressing headlong in pursuit of a major reconstruction, he has demonstrated something else about change in secular time. He has shown us just how much more imposing the challenge of reconstruction has become. The final point about Trump's political leadership is that it has brought into view the stubborn reality of the modern American government. Reconstructive ambitions typically set the leader against the institutions and norms that support the political priorities of the past, but for Trump this has opened onto a truly monumental collision. He has faced off against what is now a dense institutional infrastructure meant to protect and stabilize the state's commitments. His assault on the "Deep State" has targeted the authority of the courts, the Congress, the military, the state department, the FBI, the Federal Reserve, the scientists at the Agriculture Department and the Environmental Protection Agency, the weather bureau, career managers throughout the government, and the news media.⁹ The strength of the resistance he has encountered in these quarters may be far more telling than the weakness of the resistance from within his own party. It suggests both the newfound resilience of the state and the newfound limits of the Jacksonian posture in the modern age.

The resistance of the Deep State is now fueling an impeachment drive. Historically, no affiliated leader has ever been seriously threatened by impeachment. The current proceedings may thus be taken as another sign that once clear distinctions among leaders in political time are washing out. Impeachment proceedings are associated historically with opposition leaders who threaten the established regime without sufficient authority to repudiate and displace it, and that aligns Trump's case with others that have been pointing to a gradual historical convergence on the preemptive type. It may be that this moment is another harbinger of that volatile future in which presidents all press for a great transformation and in which none have the wherewithal to pull it off.

NOTES

1. On intercurrency in institutional politics, see Orren and Skowronek (2004, 108–118).
2. See also Orren and Skowronek (2017).
3. U.S. Const. art. II § 1, cl. 8.
4. U.S. Const. art II § 3.
5. See Alter (2007).
6. See, for example, the establishment of the Center for Presidential Transitions by the Partnership for Public Service.
7. See Skowronek (1997, 2020).
8. See, e.g., Leibovich (2019); O’Keefe and Weigel (2017).
9. For descriptions of several of these clashes, see Brennan Center for Justice (2017); Lynch (2018); Buchanan and Woteki (2019); Baker et al. (2019); Samuels (2019).

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CHAPTER 8

STAGGERED TERMS IN MAJORITARIAN AND NONMAJORITARIAN INSTITUTIONS

DAVID M. WILLUMSEN

The mutability in the public councils, arising from a rapid succession of new members, however qualified they may be, points out, in the strongest manner, the necessity of some stable institution in the government. Every new election in the states, is found to change one half of the representatives. From this change of men must proceed a change of opinions; and from a change of opinions, a change of measures. But a continual change even of good measures is inconsistent with every rule of prudence, and every prospect of success. The remark is verified in private life, and becomes more just, as well as more important, in national transactions.

—Alexander Hamilton or James Madison,
the Federalist Papers, No. 62

WHAT ARE STAGGERED TERMS OF OFFICE?

IN temporal terms, the renewal of the membership of an institution can take one of two forms: either the entire membership is renewed at the same time, or only part of the membership is renewed at any given renewal. This second pattern is known as staggered terms. It can be further subdivided into explicitly staggered terms, and into those terms that are implicitly staggered. The first of these are found in institutions where some share of the membership (often, but not always, half or a third) is renewed at predetermined intervals, such as every second or third year. Each member of such an

explicitly staggered institution is then said to belong to one of several classes, with each class being defined by when its members are up for replacement.

The use of explicitly staggered terms is particularly widespread in legislative upper chambers, with the most prominent example of a legislative chamber with explicitly staggered terms being the US Senate, where one-third of senators are elected for six-year terms every two years, giving rise to Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 senators.

Implicitly staggered terms exist when renewal of the membership of an institution is spread out over time, but the exact timing of the renewal is not fixed. This can occur if all vacancies are filled with full-term replacements, meaning that the exact timing of renewal is (partly) a function of when vacancies arise, either through resignation or death. For example, the staggering formula for the European Central Bank (ECB) has been significantly affected by several resignations. This contrasts with explicitly staggered terms, where vacancies caused by resignation or death (as opposed to a term simply expiring) are only filled for the remainder of the original term, thus preserving the staggering formula. The US Senate is a prominent example of this. Alternatively, implicitly staggered terms can arise when the membership of an institution is tied to elections in another arena, and these take place at irregular intervals, with variation in the timing possible. Thus, for example, some members of the governments of the German states (Länder) are *ex officio* members of the German upper chamber, the Bundesrat.¹ As state (Land) elections are spread out temporally, and can be called early, the membership of the Bundesrat is renewed whenever an election is held at the state level.

In addition to the distinction between implicitly and explicitly staggered terms, renewal can be both exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous renewal is outside of the control of the members of the staggered institutions. For example, the French Senate is renewed through elections every three years, and the senators cannot unilaterally change this. When renewal is endogenous, members can influence when renewal occurs, by deciding when to end their membership. The US Supreme Court, where members have lifetime appointments, is an extreme version of this. Here, the open-ended nature of the term of office provides members with wide leeway in timing their retirement strategically.

The number of classes of members in a staggered institution can vary significantly. In explicitly staggered institutions, the range is relatively small, almost always taking either the theoretical minimum of two (as is the case in, for example, the Australian Senate) or three (the Argentine Senate). However, in institutions with implicitly staggered terms, the number of classes can theoretically equal the number of members of the institution, as is, for example, the case for the US Supreme Court (nine members) or the European Central Bank Executive Board (six members).

The members of institutions which use staggered terms thus have systematically varying time budgets (that is, the amount of discretionary time a person controls) and time horizons (that is, the length of time into the future that a person considers when making decisions) (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009), with some members always being closer to facing reelection or reappointment than others, with the extent of this depending on the details of the staggering formula used. This systematic difference in

time budgets and horizons contrasts with the coincidental difference in the time horizon and the size of time budgets found in all institutions. No institution has a fully uniform distribution of time budgets and time horizons across all its members; in particular, given that members of an institution will eventually retire,² there will always be some within an institution who are closer to retirement than others, and so have differing time horizons. This can, particularly in the case where the retiring member has private information regarding her intention to retire, lead to the so-called last-period problem, where the removal of the desire for future terms of office may lead to behavior which is more oriented toward the private interests of the retiring member than would otherwise be the case (Lott, 1987; Zupan, 1990).

Such changes in behavior due to impending retirement have been observed in a number of legislatures, such as the US Congress (Rothenberg and Sanders, 2000), the German Bundestag (Bailer and Ohmura, 2018), and the UK House of Commons (Geys and Mause, 2016; Willumsen and Goetz, 2017). In a similar vein, the forced “retirement” caused by term limits also leads to both differential time horizons within legislatures and to differences in behavior (see, for example, Carey, 1996; Carey et al., 2006; Smart and Sturm, 2013).

However, while, as noted earlier, the coexistence of different time budgets and time horizons is always present in any institution, such differences in time budgets and time horizons differ in a key way from those differences introduced by staggered terms, that is, the partial, rather than complete, renewal of the terms of office in an institution. The key difference is that, unlike term-limited and retiring members, those members of a staggered institution who are nearest reappointment/re-election still wish to and may potentially obtain additional terms of office. In such a situation, the members that desire reappointment or re-election to an office may use the resources available to them through their office to influence the chances of this occurring. As will be discussed later, this ability to influence the likelihood of an additional term of office is key to understanding how staggered terms may influence behavior and why staggered terms may fail to achieve their goals.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: first, where staggered terms are found is discussed; second, the arguments for using staggered terms of office in an institution are reviewed; third, the key findings on the effects of staggered terms are summarized; and, fourth, potential future avenues of research are discussed. A final section concludes.

WHERE DO WE FIND STAGGERED TERMS?

Staggered terms are found in a wide variety of institutions, both majoritarian and nonmajoritarian. All of them share the motivation of at least partly isolating the decision-making in an institution from the appointing or electing principal. For example, there is widespread use of staggered terms in order to ensure the political independence of (constitutional) courts (Herron and Randazzo, 2003; Smithey and

Ishiyama, 2000). Here, staggered terms, combined with relatively long terms, restrict the ability of politicians to select a pliable majority of judges for key courts, by lowering the share of the membership of a court that is replaced during a typical legislative or presidential term. A government may of course still attempt to “pack the court,” but it can only successfully do so when having sustained electoral success over a long period of time.

As with courts, the independence of central banks is also often sought to be strengthened through the use of staggered terms for their boards of governors, and for similar reasons. Even if a political majority ultimately chooses the members of the executive board of a central bank, staggered terms of office mean that only a majority that is stable over time can appoint a majority of members. For example, in the case of the US Federal Reserve Board, if members serve out their full terms, a president would only be able to appoint a majority on the board by the start of the last year of a two-term presidency (Funderburk, 2016).

Similarly, the independence of regulatory agencies (Hanretty and Koop, 2013), public broadcasters (Hanretty, 2010), and competition authorities (Guidi, 2014) can all be increased by having terms which are longer than the term of office of a legislature and/or government, and by not renewing the whole membership of such institutions in one go.

The most prominent majoritarian institutions to use staggered terms are legislatures. A list of the national legislative chambers that are elected using staggered terms is shown in Table 8.1.³ While the term length used in staggered chambers varies between four and eight years,⁴ two-thirds of the nineteen chambers using staggered terms have a six-year term, which is also the average term length across the 19 chambers. With the exception of Brazil and Chile (which both use eight-year terms), all explicitly staggered upper chambers use six-year terms (thirteen in all), with the term length of the longest-lived legislative chamber using staggered terms, the US Senate.

Six upper chambers, all of which use six-year terms, replace one-third of their members every two years, while nine chambers replace half their members at intervals equal to half the length of a term: Argentina’s lower chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, has elections every two years, the Senate of Chile has elections every four years, and seven upper chambers with six-year terms have elections every three years. Three chambers have membership which changes based on substate elections, while only the Brazilian Senate uses renewals with different proportions of senators elected (one-third and two-thirds every four years, respectively).

All national-level staggered chambers are found in bicameral systems, but only one is not an upper chamber (the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies). This coexistence of staggered terms and bicameralism emphasizes the policy stability often argued to be an advantage of bicameralism (Campion, 1953; Levmore, 1992; Money and Tsebelis, 1992; Mughan and Patterson, 1999; Riker, 1992a, 1992b; Russell, 2001). As upper chambers, in contrast to lower chambers, often have very high levels of malapportionment (see Samuels and Snyder, 2001), the use of staggered terms in upper chambers further underlines the partially nonmajoritarian nature of these institutions.

Table 8.1: National Legislative Chambers with Staggered Terms of Office

Country	Term Length (years)	Number of Members	Upper or Lower Chamber	Staggering Formula
Algeria	6	144	Upper	Half every 3 year [†]
Argentina	4	257	Lower	Half every 2 years
Argentina	6	72	Upper	One-third every 2 years
Australia	6*	76	Upper	Half every 3 years
Austria	5**	61	Upper	Dependent on substate elections
Brazil	8	81	Upper	One-third and two-thirds alternately every 4 years
Chile	8	50	Upper	Half every 4 years
Czechia	6	81	Upper	One-third every 2 years
France	6	348	Upper	Half every 3 years
Germany	5***	69	Upper	Dependent on substate elections
Haiti	6	30	Upper	One-third every 2 years
India	6	245	Upper	One-third every 2 years
Japan	6	242	Upper	Half every 3 years
Kazakhstan	6	47	Upper	Half every 3 year [†]
Nepal	6	59	Upper	One-third every 2 years
Pakistan	6	104	Upper	Half every 3 years
Philippines	6	24	Upper	Half every 3 years
Russia	5	170	Upper	Dependent on substate elections
United States of America	6	100	Upper	One-third every 2 years

Source: Parline database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (<https://data.ipu.org/>).

* The senators from the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are elected for three-year terms.

** Oberösterreich: 6 years.

*** Bremen: 4 years.

† Partly appointed (Algeria: 48 of 144; Kazakhstan: 15 of 47).

Previously, elections to the Dutch Eerste Kamer (Senate) were staggered. Staggered elections for this chamber were abolished in 1983, in part to reduce the chance of noncongruent majorities in the two chambers (van den Braak, 1998). However, abolishing the staggered terms was generally not perceived as a major change to the political system (Andeweg, 1989). Another example of the abolishment of staggered terms is Morocco, where, until the 2011 reform of the constitution, the upper chamber (the House of Councillors) was elected using staggered terms.

Staggered terms are particularly widespread in the Institutions of the European Union (EU). As can be seen in Table 8.2, the European Central Bank, the Council of the EU, the European Council, the Court of Justice of the EU (both courts), and the Court of Auditors all use staggered terms of office. Thus, of the seven institutions

Table 8.2: Staggered Terms in the EU Institutions

Institution	Term Length	Renewable?	Number of Members
European Central Bank (Executive Board)	8 years	No	6
Council of the EU	Dependent on national office	Yes	One per member state
European Council	Dependent on national office	Yes	One per member state
Court of Justice*	6 years	Yes	One per member state
General Court*	6 years	Yes	Two per member state
Court of Auditors	6 years	Yes	One per member state

* Together, the Court of Justice (often referred to as the European Court of Justice—ECJ) and the General Court form the Court of Justice of the European Union.

of the EU, only the European Parliament and the European Commission do not use either implicitly or explicitly staggered terms of office; in other words, for the nonmajoritarian EU institutions, staggering is the norm. While membership of both the European Council and the Council of the EU is staggered due to the link to being in government at the national level (a similar design to that of the German upper chamber, the Bundesrat), the other three institutions are explicitly staggered, in all cases to increase their independence of political actors and to decrease the power of temporary majorities.

The widespread use of staggered terms in the EU institutions contributes to the widespread heterotemporality of the EU, that is, the lack of an overarching electoral or political cycle (Goetz, 2009, 2012). Although the alignment of the terms of the European Parliament and the European Commission has led to the emergence of an EU “electoral cycle,” this cycle only fully encompasses these two institutions, and not, most prominently, the Council (Goetz, 2017), an implicitly staggered institution whose member’s time horizons are dominated by domestic political elections.

Particularly noteworthy is the patterns of staggering of the members of the ECB’s Executive Board. When these first took office in 1998, their terms were explicitly staggered (meaning that only one [Otmar Issing] of the original six members was given an eight-year term) with either a year or six months between the expiration of any two terms. This meant that, in future renewals, it would take a minimum of two years to replace a majority (i.e., four) of the members of the Executive Board. However, while the terms of office of the ECB Executive Board members were designed to be staggered, new members of the Executive Board would always be appointed to full eight-year terms. This is also the case for Executive Board members who are appointed following an early vacancy, which contrasts with the situation for the US Federal Reserve Board of Governors, where early vacancies are only filled until the end of the term that was held by the Governor who left office before the end of their term.⁵

Due to a number of early resignations from the Executive Board and the appointment of new members to full eight-year terms, the staggering formula of the ECB’s Executive

Board has been broken. Four of its members' terms, including that of the president, now expire within seven months of each other, with the two other terms expiring a year before and a year after this seven-month period.⁶ As such, the Council can appoint a majority of Executive Board members in a very brief period of time, essentially meaning that the Executive Board is no longer meaningfully staggered as an institution.

WHY HAVE STAGGERED TERMS?

A key challenge in the design of any institution is how to balance accountability and long-term planning. This is particularly pressing in the design of democratic institutions: While democratic power is, by definition, time limited (Linz, 1998), long-term planning is necessary for a successful polity, and it is generally agreed that temporary majorities should ideally not lead to large changes to public policy.

As noted in the quote from the *Federalist Papers* at the start of this chapter, too rapid and frequent changes to public policy are detrimental; regardless of the merits of any specific policy, constantly changing policies undermines good public policy. In other words, policy stability has value in and of itself. One way identified in the *Federalist Papers* to increase policy stability while still ensuring responsiveness to the policy preferences of the voting public is limiting the extent and frequency with which the membership of a policymaking body is renewed (Hamilton, Jay, and Madison, 2001).

These concerns have also been identified by more recent scholarship. As Majone (1996, 12) notes, "it is quite difficult for democratic politicians to credibly commit themselves to a long-term strategy," which in turn makes the development of consistent long-term policy strategies a key public policy challenge, especially since a legislature cannot bind its successor (and nor can any political coalition) (Majone, 1996).

Staggered terms are one solution to these problems, and are used with the goals of increasing time budgets (through long terms of office), lengthening institutional time horizons (by ensuring that not every member pursues reelection at the same time), and increasing over-time consistency and stability in policy outcomes (Majone, 1996; Waller, 1989).

By increasing the likelihood that changes to public policy need to be supported in multiple (successive) elections before a majority of an institution supports them, staggered terms also allow for the slowing down of the translation of shifting policy preferences into public policy, which helps ensure policy moderation by avoiding policy swings whenever there are temporary shocks to policy preferences (Lindner, 2000). As the long terms associated with staggered terms means that a part of a body being replaced in a staggered manner will always be quite far from the moment in which they need to renew their mandates, this temporary isolation of decision-makers from their ultimate principals helps prevent the overturning of policies in the short run, which in turns means that delegating power to institutions which use staggered terms increases the credibility of policy decisions (Majone, 1996).

In addition, staggered terms also aim to restrain short-termist behavior in an institution. This is particularly important in situations where members of an institution have the ability to influence their chances of obtaining an additional term of office by strategically altering their behavior. In this situation, approaching term renewal encourages short-termist behavior, in particular for bodies whose membership is renewed by election. By reducing the share of an institution which is up for renewal in any given election to (almost always) at most half,⁷ the number of members who are up for election will thus not constitute a majority. While those members up for reelection may wish to pursue short-termist public policy to improve their chances of reelection, those members not up for reelection will (at least in theory) prevent the members up for renewal from engaging in such election-oriented short-termist behavior. At subsequent elections, when those members previously not up for reelection in turn face voters, the class(es) not up will then in turn prevent them from pursuing short-termist public policy, and so on.

However, the use of staggered terms is not unproblematic; the combination of the ability of members of an institution to alter their behavior over the course of a term and their ability to influence their own chances of additional terms of office may lead to a perversion of the goals of staggered terms rather than the virtuous cycle of mutual constraint suggested earlier.

As is well documented in the literature on political business cycles, politicians are willing to attempt to manipulate the economy so that it is performing well in the run-up to elections, even if this is inefficient in the long run. That is, politicians are willing to alter their behavior in ways that are suboptimal for the functioning of the system in order to increase their chances of obtaining an additional term of office (see the chapter by Veiga, Efthyvoulou, and Morozumi in this volume for an overview of this literature).

Politicians can similarly manipulate their own individual behavior by becoming more active in the legislature in the run-up to elections; that is, in addition to political business cycles, legislative business (or activity) cycles can also occur. As with attempts to manipulate the economy, the underpinning of legislative business and activity cycles is that voters are (perceived to be) more likely to assess how well politicians have done their job when elections are approaching, paying less attention and giving less weight to events earlier in the term (Healy and Lenz, 2014; Lindstädt and Vander Wielen, 2011), something illustrated by, for example, politicians implementing unpopular policy changes (such as austerity measures) earlier in a legislative term (Strobl et al., forthcoming).

Because of this recency bias among voters, legislators are incentivized to focus their (visible) efforts and activities toward the end of the term, so that voters will perceive them as hardworking, and so presumably worthy of an additional term of office, a behavioral pattern which is suboptimal from a public policy perspective compared to a more even distribution of activity. Such legislative business cycles have been found in Italy (Lagona et al., 2012; Lagona and Padovano, 2008), France (Padovano and Gavoille, 2017), Czechia (Brechler and Gersl, 2011), and the European Parliament (Kovats, 2009).

The combination of reelection-seeking behavior by individual politicians and influence over the public purse is particularly potent, since it incentivizes politicians to use public spending to increase their personal chances of reelection. Empirical evidence of such behavior has been found in a number of countries, for example the United States (Adler and Lapinski, 1997; Knight, 2005; Rich, 1989; Shepsle and Weingast, 1981; Weingast et al., 1981), Germany (Stratmann and Baur, 2002), and Italy (Golden and Picci, 2008).

Whenever the powers of an office can be used to influence the chances of being reelected or reappointed to that office, incentives will exist for incumbents to utilize these powers to manipulate public policy to help them achieve the goal of an additional term. This is near-universally the case for legislatures, but is also the case for central banks, whose board members can pursue interest rate policies favored by the appointing politicians. As such, the combination of voters' (perceived) recency bias and legislators' willingness to use the powers of their office to increase their chances of reelection means that the effect of staggered terms may be reversed if legislators not up for reelection also become more active when elections approach.⁸ Alternatively, legislators not facing the voters in an upcoming election may engage in a cross-temporal log-roll with those who are up for reelection, allowing the latter to obtain reelection-oriented public goods in the expectation that they will be similarly advantaged when they next face the voters.

The larger number and greater frequency of elections necessary to accommodate staggered terms (see Table 8.1) means that one class will very often be very near to having their term renewed and so incentivized to behave in a short-termist manner. If the other members of the legislature are willing to aid them in this, staggered terms, rather than leading to more stable behavior and policy outcomes, can instead lead to an increase in the number of legislative activity and business cycles, due to a near-constant pursuit of reelection (Willumsen and Goetz, 2015). A similar argument applies to nonmajoritarian institutions using staggered renewal of membership.

Staggered terms may also lead to an increase in both rush and delay in the policymaking process. When a change in political control seems likely in the not-too-distant future, those currently in the majority have an incentive to rush through policy changes, prior to potentially losing majority status. Those currently in the minority similarly have incentives to manipulate the timing of decision-making, with delay presenting them with the opportunity to change their status from minority to majority prior to decisions being made (and so allowing them to determine future policy when they are in the majority). While such incentives exist in all (political) institutions, the added number of opportunities for a change in control caused by the more frequent renewals in staggered institutions means that both rush and delay are viable strategies for a much greater part of the time.

Thus, while staggered terms have been advocated as a way in which to increase the time horizons of institutions and ensure more stable policy outcomes, it is unclear whether they can achieve their aims.

THE EFFECTS OF STAGGERED TERMS

To varying extents, the effects of staggered terms in both majoritarian and non-majoritarian institutions remain relatively unexplored. While recent developments have pushed forward our understanding of this institutional feature, much still remains to be learned.

Starting with staggered terms in nonmajoritarian institutions, a key concern with regards to central banks is the extent to which they are politically independent. Staggered terms are argued to increase the likelihood of this being the case, as the government at any given time cannot simply replace the members of a central bank's governing board in order to obtain its preferred monetary policy, but it must wait until their terms expire, thus leading to more stable policy outcomes and "smoother" changes to public policy (see, for example, Lindner, 2000). While staggered terms have been explicitly modeled in terms of their effects on central bank boards and the influence politicians have on them, the general assumption in the literature on staggered terms for central bank boards is that the preferences and behavior of board members are stable over time, with board members being perfect agents of their appointing principal (García De Paso, 2000; Hix et al., 2010; Waller, 1989, 1992).

Staggered terms are also often employed for (constitutional) courts, again in an attempt to isolate them from political pressure. However, the limited frequency with which judges are reappointed to office (either through lifetime tenure, as in the United States, or through an explicit prohibition on reappointment, as for the German Constitutional Court [the *Bundesverfassungsgericht*]) also limits the extent to which staggered terms may influence the behavior of judges. Because of this, the primary interest when it comes to the appointment of judges is the initial appointment and the frequency with which politicians can fill openings on a court (see, for example, Cameron and Kastellec, 2016; Krehbiel, 2007; Lauderdale and Clark, 2012).

While the literature on the independence of competition agencies, regulatory agencies, and public broadcasters explores term lengths and whether a term of office can be renewed, similarly to the literature on central bank independence, how staggered terms may influence how independent such institutions are of political pressure has not been systematically explored. One exception is Selin (2015), who, studying over 300 federal agencies in the United States, found that the presence of staggered terms is highly correlated with independent decision makers. Also exploring the independence of federal agencies, Hollibaugh Jr. (2018) finds that patronage appointments are much less likely to be made to agencies which have less independence, with staggered terms being used as one indicator for agency independence.

One noteworthy, albeit nonpolitical, field in which staggered terms have been subject to substantial analysis is the study of company boards of directors, in particular whether staggered board terms influence the value of a company (Bebchuk and Cohen, 2005; Duru et al., 2013; Jiraporn et al., 2012). As with other institutions, the goal of staggered

(or “classified,” that is, containing different “classes” of members) boards is to insulate the decision-making process of the board of directors (here from shareholders or takeovers). In this way, the behavior of companies should be altered relative to how they would behave without staggered terms (Bebchuk, 2013; Faleye, 2009; Jiraporn and Chintrakarn, 2009), with the goal of better long-term decision-making (Cremers and Nair, 2005; Gompers et al., 2003; Jiraporn and Gleason, 2007).

While there is substantial disagreement on the extent to which such independence is a good thing, there is evidence that staggered terms influence the overall behavior of companies, leading to lower levels of debt (Jiraporn and Liu, 2008), higher levels of transparency (Jiraporn, Chintrakarn, and Kim, 2012), less spending on research (Faleye, 2009), greater dividend payments (Jiraporn and Chintrakarn, 2009), and a lower overall value of a company (Bebchuk, 2013). More recent work, however, found “no evidence that it [staggered boards of directors] is uniformly harmful or helpful” (Amihud, Schmid, and Solomon, 2018, 77). While the issues addressed in the literature on staggered boards of directors do not directly speak to the motivations for using staggered terms for political institutions, the literature on such boards is highly developed, with a substantial number of studies seeking to establish the effects of staggered terms on overall outcomes and whether substantial changes in firm-level behavior are driven by them.

The literature on staggered terms in majoritarian institutions is more substantial than that on such terms in nonmajoritarian institutions, and it can be split into two parts: one part of this literature directly analyses how staggered terms influence legislators’ behavior and policy outcomes, while another part uses staggered terms as a research design to explore a number of questions about legislator behavior more generally.

Starting with the research on the influence of staggered terms as such, a key interest is whether, given that political actors, and in particular legislators, are strongly motivated by achieving reelection (Mayhew 1974), such terms leads to an increase in the number of political business and activity cycles. Analyzing the upper chambers of Australia, France, Germany, and Japan, all of which use staggered terms, Willumsen et al. (2018) find that approaching elections generally increases both the number of bills and the number of amendments introduced in these chambers. Further, such increases in activity are found among both upper chamber members who are “up next” (that is, facing the electorate at the next election to the chamber), and among those members who are not “up next,” indicating that staggered terms do not necessarily lead to different behavior among the different classes of legislators, something which is assumed as part of the argument regarding the stability-inducing effects of staggered terms.

Willumsen and Goetz (2019), analyzing the French Senate, also find that approaching elections influence both the behavior of senators “up next” as well as the behavior of those senators not “up next.” Analyzing the introduction of bills and amendments, as well as the asking of questions and the giving of speeches, they find that while senators “up next” become less active as elections approach, something encouraged by the unusually small electorates used in the indirect elections for the French Senate, those not

“up next” become more active, again indicating that staggered terms influence the behavior both of those “up next” and those not “up next.” One senator is quoted as observing that the staggered terms used for elections to the French Senate lead to an “eternal electoral campaign” (Willumsen and Goetz, 2019, 280), again indicating that staggered terms may not be achieving their goals.

Studying appropriations in the US Congress, and exploiting the fact that in any given election year some states are not electing any senators, Shepsle et al. (2009) directly explore how staggered terms influence public spending. Analyzing the distribution of “pork” in the US Congress, Shepsle et al. (2009) show that such appropriations increase in a state whenever one of its senators is up for reelection, compared to when this is not the case. Given that only one-third of senators are up for reelection every two years, this indicates the presence of a cross-temporal log-roll between senators up for reelection and the remaining two-thirds of senators, rather than the hypothetical constraining effect of a majority of members not being up for reelection during any given senate election, suggesting that the use of staggered terms can lead to an increase in terms of the problem of political business cycles.

The contrast between explicitly and implicitly staggered terms also influences how staggered terms affect a political system. In systems with explicitly staggered terms, early elections are generally not possible.⁹ However, in institutions which are implicitly staggered, early elections for the body through which the upper chamber is filled can occur, and this can lead to unexpected changes in the (partisan) composition of a chamber. While some such elections are perceived as foregone conclusions, and so relatively easily incorporated into the calculations of other actors in the political system, most elections have some uncertainty about their outcome, which can lead to miscalculations by other actors. For example, the increased uncertainty about what policies are acceptable to the Council of the EU that comes with national elections has been found to lead to more withdrawals (that is, failures) of Commission proposals (Boranbay-Akan, König, and Osnabrügge, 2017). The turnover of membership of the Council of the EU has also been found to reduce the Council’s bargaining success relative to the EU Commission and the EP (both of which are, of course, unstaggered) (Scherpereel and Perez, 2015).

In addition to the literature which explicitly analyzes the effects of staggered terms on behavior and policy outcomes, a substantial literature has exploited staggered terms as a research design, since they allow for analyzing the behavior of legislators in the same chamber being subject to the same institutional constraints, and facing the same issues, while having variation in terms of the time until they face reelection. Such a research design has been used to analyze variation in attendance and speech-making in the Japanese upper chamber, the Sangiin, finding that legislators up for reelection speak less often when elections approach, but speak for longer when they do speak (Fukumoto and Matsuo, 2015). Using a similar approach, Bouton et al. (forthcoming) find that US senators become more likely to appeal to single-issue voter groups as elections approach, while Lazarus and Steigerwalt (2009) leverage staggered terms to explore pork-barrel spending in the US Congress.

As staggered terms mean that some elections for the staggered chamber may coincide with other, more prominent, elections, and some will not, different types of politicians will choose to run in these differently timed elections. Lucardi and Micozzi (2016) find that less experienced politicians use “midterm” elections to the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies to increase their visibility, compared to more experienced politicians, who prefer to contest congressional elections taking place at the same time as presidential elections.

Staggered terms can also lead to different election years having a different number of representatives being elected from a district, which is unavoidable when a district has an uneven number of representatives. This can be leveraged to explore how electoral outcomes are influenced by district magnitude. Lucardi (2019), analyzing the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies, finds that larger district magnitude leads to lower levels of disproportionality, increases the number of parties gaining seats, and leads to an increase in the vote share of smaller parties.

Staggered terms have also been used to study the effects of term length on legislator behavior. In some American states, the state constitution mandates that in the election after the redistricting following the decennial census, all upper-chamber members must be elected using the new districts. In order to avoid breaking the staggering formula, this means that for the election following redistricting, the term length of some upper-chamber legislators has to be shorter than for others, in order to avoid breaking the staggering formula, with senators randomly assigned to terms of different lengths. Exploiting this random assignment of term length, Titunik (2016) finds that legislators with shorter terms raise and spend more money on reelection and, in two of three states studied, introduce fewer bills (see also Dal Bo and Rossi, 2011, for a similar approach).

FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

While the research discussed in the previous section has provided important insights into how staggered terms influence the behavior of political actors and policy outcomes, a number of avenues for future research remain. It remains generally unclear how the incentives of individual members of a staggered institution interact with each other and with the collective incentives of, in particular, political parties, to form overall outcomes. Questions such as to what extent, and under what circumstances, the pursuit of reelection/appointment influences the overall stance and behavior of an organization and how this influences (public policy) outcomes remain unanswered.

First, while the effects of staggered terms have been explored in a number of the chambers listed in Table 8.1, as discussed in the previous section, most of these chambers remain substantially unexplored from the perspective of staggered term. Even in the chambers where staggered terms have been analyzed, this is usually limited to either a subset of parliamentary activities, relatively short time periods, or a combination of both. Understanding how staggered terms influence the incentives of behavior

of legislators in all of the 18 countries which use staggered terms in their national legislature is necessary in order to fully understand the effects of this institution.

In addition to the limited knowledge we have of the effects of staggered terms in each of the chambers that use them, the comparative analysis of staggered terms is also still in its infancy, with explicitly comparative work on staggered terms remaining rare (but see Willumsen, Stecker, and Goetz, 2018, for an exception). Given the large number of national legislative chambers which use staggered terms, substantial variation exists on key design features of staggered terms, such as the frequency of elections, membership size, the share of members up for renewal in any given election, and the powers of the staggered legislative chamber, that is, the level of influence on legislation as well as on public spending that the staggered chamber has.

In particular, the latter point is ripe for further exploration, as the power of a staggered chamber has substantial potential to influence the incentives and so behavior of legislators in the other (usually nonstaggered) chamber in a bicameral legislature. In other words, to what extent do the powers of upper chambers relative to the lower chamber matter for behavior and outcomes? The chambers listed in Table 8.1 have greatly varying degrees of influence over the budget and the legislative process, ranging from having only the power of delay, it being possible for the lower chamber to overrule the upper chamber (as is the case for the French Senate and the Austrian Bundesrat), to upper chambers that are true veto players and equals in the legislative process (such as the American and Australian Senates). The greater power of the upper (staggered) chamber relative to the lower chamber, the greater effects of staggered terms are to be expected.

The German Bundesrat in particular has substantial potential for insights, since the chamber's legislative powers vary depending on the issue a piece of legislation deals with.¹⁰ However, the implicit nature of the staggering formula in the German Bundesrat may limit the extent to which such findings can travel to staggered chambers with explicitly staggered terms.

The literature on staggered terms generally does not explore the substantive effects of staggered terms as such on political outcomes (but see Shepsle et al., 2009, for an exception). Thus, while a number of works explore how staggered terms influence the behavior of legislators, for example, in introducing legislation or giving speeches, the substantive effects of staggered terms, that is, the extent to which changes to public policy are driven by, and so differ due to the use of staggered terms, remain to a large extent unknown. Given the generally stated goal of staggered terms to lead to increased policy stability, understanding this point is key for any appraisal of whether staggered terms achieve their goals. Any discussion of the influence of staggered terms on policy outcomes should also seek to understand the extent to which this varies depending on whether public policy as such is analyzed, or whether the focus is on budgets, especially given the clear opportunities in the latter case for legislators to engage in particularistic or reelection-oriented spending.

The effects of staggered terms on the relationship between the upper and lower chamber in a country are little explored, as are the effects of staggered terms in an

upper chamber on the behavior of legislators in the lower chamber, in particular when elections approach. The work discussed in this chapter has explored how staggered terms may influence the behavior of the members of a staggered chamber, identifying that upcoming elections influence not only those “up next” but also those members not “up next,” the extent to which staggered terms influence the incentives of lower-chamber (nonstaggered, with the exception of the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies) members of the legislature is unexplored. In particular for those staggered chambers which wield substantial power, partisan links between chambers may encourage lower-chamber members to alter their behavior, much like those members of a staggered chamber not “up next” alter their behavior as elections approach. The more powerful the staggered chamber is, the greater the incentives of legislators in the lower (nonstaggered) chamber to alter their behavior in order to appeal to voters, in order to maximize their party’s postelection power and influence in the upper chamber. On the other hand, if a staggered chamber has little influence on legislation, the incentives for a lower-chamber legislator to alter her behavior as upper-chamber elections approach are very limited.

The effects of staggered terms also remain little explored in nonmajoritarian institutions. To the extent that reappointment is possible for members of such institutions, incentives exist for members to alter their behavior to please whomever has the power to ensure or prevent them from achieving another term of office. As noted previously, the literature on central bank independence tends to assume that the behavior of members of the governing boards is stable over time; incorporating the possibility of changes in behavior as renewal approaches would allow for a more detailed understanding of how political pressures may influence interest-rate setting. Hence, rather than expecting appointees to be perfect principals of their appointers, a more realistic modeling of their incentives would include the possibility of time-variant behavior, which would in turn provide greater insights into how politically independent central bank boards are. A similar argument for explicitly exploring the combined effects of staggered terms and the desire for reappointment can be made for the governing boards of other public bodies, such as regulatory agencies, broadcasters, and courts.

Finally, the EU stands out as a polity with substantial potential to explore the effects of staggered terms. As discussed earlier in this chapter, in five of the seven EU institutions, staggered terms are employed, with different staggering formulas employed in different institutions with different powers, both majoritarian and nonmajoritarian, meaning that a complex interplay of time horizons and powers should be observed, which in turn could provide a variety of insights into the effects of staggered terms.

CONCLUSION

Staggered terms are widespread, little understood, and can provide insights into a wide variety of behaviors and political phenomena. As this chapter has shown, despite their

wide usage, our understanding of them is relatively underdeveloped. What is clear, however, is that the goal of stable behavior and outcomes is not certain to be achieved. Approaching elections consistently influence the behavior of all classes in a staggered legislative chamber, and not merely the members of the class facing renewal of their mandate. The limited work on how staggered terms influence policy outcomes likewise indicates that staggered terms may fail to achieve their goals in terms of policy stability and longer time horizons.

These findings also suggest that staggered terms may, at least in part, fail to achieve their goals of ensuring the independence of courts, central banks, and regulatory agencies, as members of such bodies are incentivized to alter their behavior to please appointers as their term of office comes to a close; if this occurs a meaningful amount of time before the end of a term, the goal of insulating such bodies from political pressure may fail. For both majoritarian and nonmajoritarian institutions, much more work is required to fully assess the extent to which staggered terms achieve their aims.

The future avenues of work discussed in the previous section will provide a better understanding of staggered terms, which will, in turn, provide practical insights into how best to design the membership renewal procedure for upper chambers and other public bodies; provide a subtler understanding of how the interplay between different legislative actors influence public policy through legislators' appeal to voters; and give us a better understanding of how, whether, and the extent to which staggered terms should be used in any organization where members have the possibility to influence their own chances of renewing their terms.

NOTES

1. The number of Land ministers who are members of the Bundesrat varies between three and six per Land.
2. As of November 2020, of the 106 former members of the US Supreme Court, who have life-time tenure, 51 have died in office; but only 11 have done so in the last 100 years.
3. In addition to the chambers listed in Table 8.1, several other national legislative chambers have noncomplete term renewals. The Senate of Malaysia (Dewan Negara) has continuous renewal of membership; however, a maximum of one reelection is possible, and 44 of the 70 senators are appointed rather than elected. Several legislatures also have mixed-length terms, that is, a situation where members of a legislative body are elected for different lengths of time; this is the case for the Afghani upper chamber (the House of Elders); the Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia, where 10 members are elected for two-year terms every two years, and four members are elected for four-year terms every four years; and the Parliament of Singapore, where appointed members serve two-and-a-half-year terms, while elected members serve five-year terms.
4. Until it was phased out in favor of six-year terms in the early 2000s, the French Senate was elected for nine-year terms, with one-third elected every three years. Similarly, members of the Argentinian Senate were elected for nine-year terms until this was changed to six-year terms in the 1994 constitutional amendment.

5. While Federal Reserve Governors cannot be reappointed to a full 14-year term, they can be appointed to a full 14-year term even if they have previously been appointed to fill the remainder of a term of another Governor who left office early.
6. The ECB provides a very helpful graphical illustration of the Executive Board members' terms of office: <https://www.ecb.europa.eu/ecb/orga/decisions/eb/html/ebtimeline.en.html>
7. The only exception to this at the level of national legislatures is the Brazilian Senate, where members serve eight-year terms, with elections every four years. The share of members replaced in an election alternates between one-third and two-thirds, meaning that in every second senate election, two-thirds of the seats are up for renewal.
8. A similar argument applies to nonelected bodies, as long as the appointing actor has a re-necy bias.
9. The Australian Senate is an exception, as it can be dissolved in a so-called double dissolution (Constitution of Australia 2012, sec. 57).
10. See, for example, Manow and Burkhart (2007) and Stecker (2016) for a discussion of the variation in the legislative powers of the Bundesrat and the effects of this.

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CHAPTER 9

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE TIME IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

STEPHEN E. HANSON

POLITICAL scientists have long had trouble integrating temporality into mainstream analytic approaches in the discipline. As early as 1971, Samuel P. Huntington bemoaned the relative lack of scholarly attention to the sources of change over time in political institutions. The dominant ahistorical approach to politics, he argued, reflected the social conditions of those countries where social science was first developed: “modern political science . . . came into being in the stable political systems of Western Europe and North America, where radical change could be viewed as a temporary deviation in, or extraordinary malfunctioning of, the political system” (Huntington, 1971, 284). In particular, he pointed out, the then-hegemonic Parsonian paradigm’s theoretical emphasis on understanding “social equilibria” in traditional and modern societies alike generated a framework poorly suited to explain the timing or dynamics of major shifts in political ideologies, institutions, and practices. Huntington approvingly cited the sociologist Barrington Moore’s parallel critique of equilibrium theory, which, Moore argued, “does not attend to intrinsic sources of change, does not predict changes that have persistent directionality (but only those that restore balance if it is disturbed), and thus does not readily handle past changes that clearly affect the current state of the system” (Moore, cited in Huntington, 1971, 308).

Huntington’s and Moore’s pleas for a more historically grounded social science bore significant fruit in the 1970s, as neo-Marxist scholars such as Peter Evans (1979) and Theda Skocpol (1979), along with neo-Weberian scholars such as Bendix (1978) and Jowitt (1978), abandoned the equilibrium assumption to explore the particular, path-dependent historical sequences involved in the origins of democratic, authoritarian, fascist, and Leninist regime types. These works, along with those of Huntington and Moore themselves, have in many ways laid the foundations for contemporary comparative historical analysis (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003). The decline of Parsonian

structural-functionalism in the 1970s, however, did not result in a general theoretical and methodological shift toward a more historically based political science, but instead gave rise to the dominance of a new form of atemporal equilibrium theory—this time based on neoclassical economics. Thus, a quarter century after Huntington's call to abandon ahistorical equilibrium analysis in comparative politics, James Bernard Murphy decried precisely the same tendencies in the newly hegemonic rational choice paradigm, which he described as a form of "social physics" based on late nineteenth-century mechanics:

Two core assumptions of classical mechanics help account for its status as a paradigm of knowledge and its diffusion into evolutionary biology, operations research, engineering, economics, and political science. These assumptions underpin all equilibrium analysis. First, classical mechanics demonstrates the optimality of nature. . . . Second, classical mechanics makes prediction possible by abstracting causal relationships from the path-dependence of history: hence the Laplacian dream of perfect knowledge of the future based on present conditions alone.

(Murphy, 1995, 160)

It is ironic indeed, Murphy concludes, that contemporary political scientists in search of ever-more refined theories of political equilibria are emulating a stage of physics that had to be abandoned over a century ago by physicists themselves "due to the discovery of entropy, hysteresis (causal relationships dependent on history), and indeterminacy" (1995, 160; see also Prigogine and Stengers, 2017).

Yet if Huntington was right to suggest that the scholarly fascination with ahistorical social equilibria reflects the relative stability of the regimes and institutions governing the highly developed societies within which social science first took root, the turbulence and uncertainty of twenty-first-century global politics seems likely once again to spur political scientists to focus on change rather than continuity. At a time when even the wealthiest countries in the world are experiencing severe threats to long-established political regimes and the foundational principles of the post-World War II liberal global order are being questioned as never before, a return to the study of irreversible turning points in political history seems both inevitable and salutary.

Fortunately, we need not start from scratch: there has been a marked resurgence of interest in the study of time and temporality in the political science discipline in recent years. On one hand, scholars working within the tradition of comparative historical analysis have explored in great depth what might be termed "objective" temporal processes. These include the investigation of causal relationships that may unfold slowly through long periods of time, exploring the nature of "critical historical junctures" during which individual actions and unexpected events may have an unusually powerful impact, and analyzing the challenge of formulating public policy to deal with social and environmental trends that may take decades or centuries to come to fruition (Pierson, 2004; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Jacobs, 2011). On the other hand, scholars influenced by developments in behavioral economics

and social psychology have devoted increasing attention to the problem of “subjective” time—that is, how time is perceived differently by political and social actors with varying psychological profiles, risk appetites, levels of education and so on (Kahneman, 2011; Perez-Arce, 2011; Kidd et al., 2013).

To date, however, these two literatures have developed largely in isolation from one another. This gap reflects well-known disciplinary divisions, as political scientists typically focus on analyzing macropolitical phenomena, while behavioral economists and social psychologists are more interested in understanding the sources and typical biases of human cognition. Upon reflection, however, there is also an implicit ontological divide between the objective and subjective approaches to time and politics: either time exists and can be measured and evaluated scientifically, or what we call “time” is really in the eye of the beholder, requiring us to interpret and understand various social definitions and experiences of temporality (Hall, 2003). Putting these two separate literatures into dialogue with one another thus forces us to confront a question left largely unaddressed by both of them: just how do individuals’ varied and subjective interpretations and conceptions of time sometimes cohere into stable, collective understandings of temporality that can inspire and channel collective political action?

In fact, social scientists have paid comparatively little attention to the problem of explaining the origins and mechanisms of reproduction of particular collective interpretations of political time. In this context, a return to the study of political ideology can help us link the objective and subjective approaches to political temporality. In this essay I argue, following the sociological theory of Max Weber, that there are three main ways in which diverse individual perceptions of time can be aggregated into stable, institutionalized political temporalities: through the social reinforcement of myths of political tradition; through the force of charismatic leadership that appears to believers to begin time anew; and finally, through the promulgation of ideologies that connect individuals to a common political destiny (Weber, 1979). Thus political ideology is neither atavistic nor irrational; instead, it provides a distinctive solution to the collective action problems endemic to modern mass politics. For this reason, the contemporary decay of many of the twentieth century’s most powerful ideologies, far from ushering in an age of political reason and inclusiveness, has helped to undermine the core institutions of the Western liberal order.

The essay proceeds in three main steps. First, I examine the “objective” and “subjective” approaches to political time in greater detail, showing that we currently lack any well-developed theory of how and under what conditions individuals’ subjective understandings of time can cohere into larger, seemingly objective structures of temporal order. Second, I argue that the solution to this problem requires an embrace of “Weberian methodological individualism” (Hanson, 2010)—that is, an approach that accepts as axiomatic that all social action is ultimately traceable to individual human beings, but that also allows the sources of human motivation to vary beyond utility-maximizing instrumental rationality to include affectual, value-rational, and habitual forms of action. I show how, given Weberian theoretical assumptions, political ideologies can play a particularly powerful causal role in generating standardized

orientations toward time among believers; thus, it is not surprising that the global decline of previously dominant ideological frameworks is engendering significant cognitive and institutional disorder in the early twenty-first century. Finally, I conclude with reflections on how the Weberian approach to time might suggest new approaches to current methodological debates on how best to incorporate history and temporality into the political science discipline.

TIME AND TEMPORALITY IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SCIENCE

Notwithstanding decades of theoretical debate, the problem of how to reconcile “structure” and “agency” within social science analysis remains far from resolved. What Ken Waltz (1959) called the “levels of analysis” problem in international relations, as we shall see, exists within the literature on politics and time as well. On one hand, the burgeoning literature on the comparative historical analysis of state-society relations has increasingly shifted the focus of comparativists from static analyses of the functioning of existing regimes and institutions to the development of political and social structures that persist in the “longue durée” (Braudel, 1958; Collier and Collier, 1991; Luebbert, 1991; Ertman, 1997). On the other hand, behavioral economists and social psychologists have begun to explore in more depth how “standard operating procedures” inherited from the past as well as human cognitive biases involved in intertemporal tradeoffs affect decision-making processes at the individual level (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Sunstein and Thaler, 2008; Kahneman, 2011). Yet while the two schools of thought do occasionally intersect and refer to one another, their rather different theoretical starting points have generated a major gap in our understanding of political temporality: neither school analyzes in depth the question of how subjective time orientations affect, and are in turn affected by, the seemingly more objective historical processes that endure as structural constraints over the long run.

Historical Institutional Approaches

The powerful contributions of scholars such as Pierson (2000, 2004), Mahoney (2000), and Thelen (1999, 2000) to the historical institutionalist literature on political temporality have clearly established the need to take time seriously in political science theory and methodology. Adopting a generally structuralist approach, these authors have highlighted the limitations of rational choice analyses that, in striving to demonstrate how existing political institutions can represent Nash equilibria in which no actor has an incentive to alter the status quo unilaterally, are often forced to abstract entirely from the historical conditions that gave rise to such institutions in the first place (Kreps, 1990;

Thelen, 1999). Such analyses frequently adopt the logic of what Pierson has termed an “actor-centered functionalism”—that is, the assumption that formal institutional rules can always be traced to the explicit interests of institutional designers (Pierson, 2004, 104). As Pierson points out, this axiom might seem valid when analyzing short-term political decisions about institutions with fairly predictable, proximate effects; after all, we would hardly expect politicians to help put in place rules likely to harm their own interests in the near future. Taking a longer span of historical time into account, however, demonstrates that institutions frequently generate unintended consequences, and those involved in the initial design of institutional rules often operate under entirely mistaken assumptions about their later effects (Moser, 2001). Thus, history provides no guarantee that the actual institutions chosen at any given historical juncture will be the most efficient or effective ones possible. Moreover, since institutions often generate a dynamic of “increasing returns” that tends to make them “sticky” over time, it may be difficult for later actors to undo even the visibly disadvantageous effects of initial institutional choices (David, 1985; Brian Arthur et al., 1987; Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2000). As the rise and fall of Soviet Leninism in the twentieth century shows, an entire political and economic system that appears entirely irrational and wasteful from a neoclassical economic perspective can sometimes persist for decades, leaving behind long-term legacies that continue to constrain individual choices (Hanson, 2017). Finally, a focus on the *longue durée* is, by definition, necessary in order to understand causal processes that take a very long time to unfold: the political impacts of demographic change on the frequency of political revolutions or of mass education on the political values of later generations simply cannot be analyzed by selecting a single snapshot in time (Goldstone, 1991; Darden and Grzymala-Busse, 2006).

The “temporal turn” in historical institutionalism, it is fair to say, has had a major impact in shaping the research agenda of contemporary comparativists, Americanists, and increasingly theorists of international relations as well (Streich and Levy, 2007; Fioretos, 2017). Scholars have further refined our understanding of how institutions evolve over time, often persisting in recognizable form despite major shifts in regime type (Thelen, 2004; Mahoney, 2010; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Compelling research has shown how different initial conditions for state-building can affect the durability and effectiveness of state institutions years or even decades later (Ertman, 1997; Grzymala-Busse, 2002; Slater, 2010). Increasingly sophisticated methods have begun to tease out the causal mechanisms connecting experiences of social conflict or acculturation decades or centuries ago with contemporary political attitudes (Wittenberg, 2006; Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2017; Rozenas et al., 2017).

What is still missing from this literature, however, is any sustained engagement with the deeper question: Just what is “time,” anyway? In the theoretical and empirical works cited earlier, the “temporality” that is brought back in to political science is one that is linear, unidirectional, and consistently measurable—in short, objective rather than subjective. Thus Pierson (2004, 81) distinguishes among four types of causal relationships in time: those pairing short-term causes with short-term effects (such as tornadoes), those involving short-term causes that have long-term effects (like the meteorite that wiped

out the dinosaurs), those involving long-term causes with short-term effects (such as earthquakes), and those pairing long-term causes and long-term effects (like global warming). Note, however, that all of Pierson's examples here are taken from natural science, where objective measurements of the time elapsed in cause and effect are relatively unproblematic.

For the analysis of how natural phenomena such as the impact of demographic trends or climate change on human society, measurement of duration in linear time may be viable and appropriate (e.g., Goldstone, 1991; Diamond, 2011). Once we move to the realm of subjective human phenomena, however, the problem of deciding how to measure the unfolding of time becomes potentially much more contentious. Pierson, for example, lists "languages and associated concepts of nationhood" (citing Gellner, 1983), "basic cultural outlooks" (citing Tarrow, 1992), and partisan realignments (citing Key, 1959) as examples of political phenomena involving "cumulative causes" that unfold only over the long run (Pierson, 2004, 82–83). But settling on a precise periodization to determine when a decisive change in language, nationhood, culture, or even political party identification has taken place surely requires at least some engagement with the perceptions of the actors holding such identifications.

To take one example: when, exactly, did "Soviet nationhood" give way to "Russian," "Ukrainian," and other national identities? One might reasonably argue that this shift occurred only with the formal collapse of the USSR in 1991, and thus was objectively a remarkably sudden process, albeit one with long-term effects (a "meteorite" in Pierson's scheme). Yet informed observers argue that this shift in collective identification actually began among key social groups long before the Soviet collapse, as Marxist-Leninist political institutions ironically reinforced national identity categories over time (Suny, 1993; Brubaker, 1996; Brudny, 2000)—a long-term process with long-term effects, like global warming. David Laitin (1998), meanwhile, has argued that shifts in national identity and language use under Soviet rule were the culmination of a long process of Russian imperial incorporation of its periphery, yet the identity choices of post-Soviet citizens could shift relatively quickly due to changes in local political, economic, and cultural incentive structures; from this perspective, the Soviet collapse was more like an earthquake. Finally, ideologues close to Putin disagree with both of these assessments, arguing that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the unnecessary result of unpatriotic decisions made by Gorbachev and Yeltsin; they are confident that the "artificial" national identities created in its wake will soon give way as identification with "Russian civilization" grows (e.g., Dugin, 1997). Thus they consider changes in post-Soviet nationhood as due to a short-term cause that will have a relatively short-term effect (a "tornado"). Note that in this debate, even the issue of what counts as a "short-term phenomenon" is debatable: many political scientists might consider the first post-Soviet decade as a fairly long-term test of the robustness of Russia's initial liberal capitalist institutions, while Russian nationalists might say that the "wild 1990s" were but a blip in time relative to Russia's thousand-year history. Given these complexities, it becomes difficult to determine whether to put these causal relationships into quadrants I, II, III, or IV in Pierson's chart.

A similar problem arises when trying to arrive at a consensual periodization partisan realignment in the contemporary United States. Is the Republican Party still “the same” organization as it was before the rise of Donald Trump? If so, it makes sense to see shifts in American voting patterns as a continuation of slow-moving social trends; Trump’s election as president is thus akin to an earthquake, after which a gradual rebuilding of old partisan structures might be possible. If not, it seemingly makes more sense to see Trump’s effect on partisanship as more like a meteorite that crashed suddenly into the old Republican Party, leaving former “mainstream Republicanism” essentially extinct. That so many individual Republicans today are agonizing over which of these pictures is accurate again shows clearly that there is no single “objective” answer to the question. From this perspective, Pierson’s finding that the vast majority of political science articles in leading journals have focused on “quadrant I” phenomena—that is, short-term causes with short-term effects—masks an even deeper problem in the discipline, since even among the remaining publications that do take the *longue durée* seriously, analysis of subjective time orientations and their potential impacts on political outcomes is exceedingly rare.

Given the difficulty of determining objectively what counts as a long-run or short-run process in the context of changes in human subjectivity, many of the later refinements of Pierson’s work on political temporality also face related conceptual complexities. Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Kelemen’s influential conceptualization of “critical junctures” in political history, for example, improves on Pierson’s treatment by highlighting the importance of examining relatively short “windows” of time within which the particular decisions of influential political actors have the potential to dramatically increase the probability of later macropolitical outcomes (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). Capoccia and Kelemen persuasively argue that social scientists can analyze the impact—or lack thereof—of critical junctures through a combination of process tracing and careful evaluation of counterfactual scenarios. Left out of their account is the possible causal impact of key actors’ own beliefs about the “criticality” of the historical “juncture” in which they find themselves. Yet the degree to which actors see time itself as malleable rather than inexorable can have a crucial influence on outcomes in periods of institutional uncertainty.

Thus, after the February Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks under Vladimir Lenin began to argue that the capitalist phase of Russian history could be compressed into a few months, making a “proletarian revolution” feasible, while the Menshevik opponents argued that Russia was inevitably destined to live under capitalist hegemony for many decades if not centuries (Hanson, 1997). Had there been no Bolshevik Party in 1917—a counterfactual that is easy to imagine, given the centrality of Lenin’s personal leadership to the evolution of Bolshevik beliefs during the revolution—a restoration of Russian monarchy in some form after the Russian Revolution might well have occurred. If so, later scholars might well have described 1917 as a “failed critical juncture” resulting in the restoration of the old regime, similar to the Revolutions of 1848 in several European countries. This line of reasoning suggests that 1917 may well have become a critical

juncture in Russian and world history solely because Lenin subjectively believed it to be one at the time.

In another important recent treatment, Anna Grzymala-Busse (2011) has correctly insisted on the need to distinguish temporal dynamics from causal mechanisms, which she argues are frequently conflated in historical institutionalist analyses. As she points out, “‘objective,’ ‘clock’ time has no independent causal role—but its *subjective* perceptions and experiences do” (2011, 1272). Grzymala-Busse goes on to suggest that political scientists focus not only on mere “duration” but also on the tempo, acceleration, and timing of political events. Indeed, to the extent that we can ground our analysis of social temporality within a linear understanding of time, Grzymala-Busse’s fine-grained distinctions are potentially quite helpful. Surely, we can agree, for example, that the creation of modern states objectively preceded the formation of mass education systems—and that the former is a necessary condition for the latter (Ragin, 2014). “Timing,” in the sense of how particular political events unfold sequentially, clearly does matter for a wide range of political outcomes (Smith, 2007; Slater, 2010).

Notwithstanding Grzymala-Busse’s welcome acknowledgment that objective time by itself cannot, strictly speaking, “cause” political outcomes, however, she does not go on to analyze the sources of individual subjective time orientations in any detail. Indeed, her understandings of duration, timing, tempo, and acceleration all ultimately rest on an objective, linear conception of time that can be defined and measured across a variety of social contexts with mathematical certainty. Yet applying such mathematical formulae to political events generated by actors with various subjective interpretations of time is problematic—particularly when we move beyond simple questions of timing and duration to examine higher-order temporal phenomena. It is difficult to see how political scientists would reach consensus, for example, on how to objectively measure the “tempo” of the creation of states and market economies in different social contexts. Does it make more sense to argue that postcolonial or post-Soviet states were built “faster” than Western European ones? Or should we instead insist that “juridical” states in Africa or post-Soviet states like Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Moldova are qualitatively different from early modern states of England, France, and Germany, and thus should be analyzed within a different temporal framework (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982; Ganey, 2005)? Certainly elites in most postcommunist countries did not think, subjectively, that they were compressing the entire history of European state-building into a few years; instead, many of them were working under the assumption that a quick leap to capitalism and democracy could be achieved *without* having to retrace the steps of early-modern state-builders. As for the “tempo” of marketization in these countries, influential economists frequently argued that many postcommunist elites were moving too *slowly*, relative to what these advisors subjectively thought was possible (e.g., Sachs, 1993). If it is this difficult to consensually determine the tempo of phenomena as central to the discipline as state-building and marketization, surely any effort to reach social scientific consensus about how to measure the *acceleration* of political change—that is, the rate at which political tempos increase over time—will remain out of reach for the foreseeable future.

As the above survey demonstrates, the historical institutionalist literature on political temporality has made enormous strides in theorizing the role of time at the level of macrohistorical structural change, but has much less to say about the role of time at the level of individual agents. In this respect, Alan Jacobs's *Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment* is a major breakthrough (Jacobs, 2011). Jacobs's research takes as its starting point the observable empirical reality that, despite the common assumption that rational actors are typically myopic as well as self-interested, political elites in a variety of regime contexts *do* frequently opt to make major social investments in policies that can only pay off in the very long run. Pension politics is a perfect example: by definition, policymakers who elect to restrict consumption today in order to build sufficient reserves to cover the benefits of retirees in the future must be taking the long run subjectively into account. Indeed, Jacobs argues, the available evidence seems to demonstrate that human beings typically do not see promises of future benefits as utterly unreliable; instead, individuals show only "modest impatience" (Jacobs, 2011, 35, emphasis in original; Frederick et al., 2002). If so, we can begin to analyze the conditions under which policymakers are more or less likely to find it in their interest to engage in intertemporal tradeoffs to favor future constituents, rather than redistribution of present resources to contemporary supporters.

As Jacobs's comparisons of pension policy in Britain, Germany, Canada, and the United States convincingly demonstrate, both institutional and cultural factors impact the degree to which politicians invest in the long run. In particular, elites' degrees of electoral safety, their levels of cognitive certainty about the long-term benefits of a particular policy choice, and the institutional capacity of the regime to carry out that policy in practice combine to give some politicians more "breathing room" to think about the future than others. As Jacobs notes, at least the first two of these three variables directly involve subjective cognitive factors. Elites may gain greater electoral security in dealing with a long-run policy challenge when a major "focusing event" (such as the near-depletion of the Social Security reserve fund in the United States during President Reagan's first presidential term) works to convince large majorities of voters that inaction would lead to even greater losses than modest new investments. And elites' confidence about the future results of current policy choices must ultimately rest on a "shared mental model" that downplays potential uncertainties about a favored policy's actual long-term impact—even when such assumptions are entirely incorrect, as in the case of the late nineteenth-century investments of the German Reich in social insurance, which were wiped out within a few decades (Jacobs, 2011, 78–96; see also Denzau and North, 1994).

Yet Jacobs's study, like the works of Pierson and Grzymala-Busse, devotes little attention to investigating the origins of the shared cognitive models of time that lie behind elite and popular attitudes toward the long-term future. Jacobs analyzes both the cultural and the institutional factors that generate long-run investment largely at the structural level, as collective entities that shape the time orientations of individuals within them in a common direction. But the author does not directly address where these "shared mental models" ultimately come from. Why, exactly, did German elites believe so strongly in the

“insurance model” of pension policy, while British elites assumed that future politicians could never be trusted not to raid the pension kitty? Why did the near-depletion of the Social Security trust fund in 1983 prove to be a “focusing event” that galvanized bipartisan collective action in the United States, while arguably the same phenomenon in contemporary times has only deepened partisan divides about Social Security’s ultimate viability? To be sure, no one book can take every conceivable causal variable into account, and Jacobs is certainly right that assuming only “moderate impatience” among individual social actors will typically serve as a better basis for comparative social analysis than beginning with a Hobbesian framework of universal radical discounting of the future benefits of cooperation. The evidence appears to show, however, that levels of time discounting among policymakers are not uniformly low, high, or medium; instead, discount rates vary among individuals and among social and institutional settings. Further progress in understanding the politics of temporality would seem to require a more fine-grained analysis of how individual cognitive approaches to time relate to observable collective social understandings of the past, present, and future.

Behavioral Economics and Social Psychology

Roughly simultaneously with the turn toward temporality among historical institutionalists cited previously, a group of distinguished economists, political scientists, and social psychologists have begun to explore the ways in which variations in individual time perception can create systematic deviations from the timeless equilibrium models of earlier neoclassical economic theory (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Sunstein and Thaler, 2008; Kahneman, 2011). To the extent that time has been incorporated into earlier neoclassical models, it has typically been through the inclusion of the “discount rates” of economic actors as one factor determining equilibrium outcomes. Within political science, scholars such as Robert Axelrod (1984) and Michael Taylor (1987) have demonstrated that stable cooperative outcomes in human society can emerge even among entirely self-interested utility-maximizing individuals when the rate at which some subset of individuals discount future payoffs is sufficiently low. The converse is also true: once individuals generally begin to discount promises of future benefits too highly, a Hobbesian equilibrium of universal defection from all proposals to provide public goods becomes inevitable. The question thus arises: just why do some human beings evince low discount rates, while others act as if the future is entirely uncertain and unpredictable? Typical equilibrium models within political science cannot address this question directly, since for the purposes of mathematical tractability the discount rate is typically set uniformly for all actors, and its variation is taken as exogenous. Moreover, rational choice theory often assumes that collective actors such as “the state,” classes such as labor or business, or even “the people” can be usefully modeled as strategic individuals—eliding the collective action problems that would logically undermine the cohesion of states, classes, or large groups in social settings when discount rates are too high (Scharpf, 1991; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006).

Most of the solutions to the problem of time discounting offered in the rational choice literature involve the introduction of institutions that are seen to make current commitments to bind future conduct “credible” (Williamson, 1975). To recount the vast literature on “credible commitment” in political science would take us far beyond this essay. However, upon closer examination, almost all of the mechanisms proposed in this literature suffer from a key logical inconsistency: the very institutions that are supposed to make the future conduct of rational actors predictable are themselves “public goods,” and thus unlikely to be provided by utility-maximizing individuals with high discount rates. North and Weingast, for example, famously argue that the rough balance of power between the English crown and the parliament after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 ensured that new institutions of property rights would not be overturned by an overzealous monarchy, making it rational for property owners to invest in long-run opportunities for profit (North and Weingast, 1989). But why did any rational actor in 1688, after decades of upheaval and civil war during which all political institutions had been repeatedly disrupted, now assume that the collective entities “the monarchy” and “the parliament” would endure as such long into the future? On this subject, the authors have little to say. Yet monarchies and parliamentary assemblies alike appeared and disappeared with some frequency in early modern Europe. The fact that English elites after 1688 nonetheless subjectively thought that the bargains struck during the Glorious Revolution would be honored by all parties for the foreseeable future is thus itself a causal factor worthy of explanation.

Moreover, by now there is copious empirical evidence that rates of time discounting among actual human beings do vary quite widely, with significant effects on later outcomes. Mischel’s famous psychological experiments have indicated that young children who are able to delay gratification—for example, foregoing a small snack such as a marshmallow in favor of obtaining a larger reward fifteen minutes later—experience later life benefits, including higher scores on standardized tests, greater self-reported feelings of efficacy, lower rates of drug addiction, and lower rates of obesity (Mischel et al., 1989; Ayduk et al., 2000; Schlam et al., 2013). Later scholars, to be sure, have noted that differences among children in their ability to delay gratification may themselves reflect prior variation in socioeconomic status, parental education, and other sociological factors; replications of the original analysis of Mischel and his collaborators that include controls for such factors show less powerful associations between childhood self-control and later life outcomes (Kidd et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2018). Conversely, young people with greater exposure to meritocratic educational institutions—even if they are initially selected by lottery—are more likely than their peers to develop longer time horizons (Perez-Arce, 2011). Still, the weight of the evidence suggests that differences in time discounting among children and youth—however these differences might initially emerge—are indeed a significant predictor of later individual attainment.

Nor do human decision-makers tend to converge toward a uniform rational approach to time and temporality as they age and gain greater experience. Indeed, as Kahneman and Tversky have demonstrated, human beings in general are apparently poorly equipped cognitively to make rational decisions about intertemporal tradeoffs,

systematically undervaluing the value of possible future payoffs relative to the potential cost of present losses (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984). Moreover, human judgments about what will bring us the most happiness in the future is clouded by the fact that our memories of past events are imperfect: “The remembering self . . . also tells stories and makes choices, and neither the stories nor the choices properly represent time. In storytelling mode, an episode is represented by a few critical moments, especially the beginning, the peak, and the end. Duration is neglected” (Kahneman, 2011, 407). In order to overcome these and other common forms of cognitive bias, individuals must suspend their “gut instincts” and spend time deliberating over their choices—substituting what Kahneman terms “system 2” cognition over the more automatic “system 1” decision-making style we share with other animals (Kahneman, 2011). Given these cognitive preconditions among *Homo sapiens* as a species, it follows that powerful collective stories about the histories of one’s social group, particularly when these are largely accepted without much deliberation, will tend to generate systematic deviations from pure rational utility maximization.

Indeed, sociologists have discovered a remarkably wide range of ways of thinking about time across different cultural and historical contexts (Zerubavel, 2003). In particular, the typical Western view of time as essentially linear and abstract is quite exceptional in comparative context; most human communities throughout history have instead tended to describe time and duration as concrete—tied to the unfolding of events themselves—rather than use an abstract measuring system for assessing the passage of time (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Elias, 1992; Hanson, 1997). Common metaphors for temporal phenomena in different languages also vary, with significant, measurable effects on how individuals from different linguistic backgrounds perceive and order time (Lai and Boroditsky, 2013). In short: social time is essentially subjective and variable, not objective and uniform. Thus “mnemonic warriors” with distinct conceptions of group history can sometimes quickly reorder conventional political understandings of the past—with dramatic effects on political institutions (Bernhard and Kubik, 2014). Yet at present we lack any consensual theory that might help us link these variations in subjective time orientation with the observable long-run processes of social change studied by historical institutionalists.

INTEGRATING SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE TIME: A WEBERIAN APPROACH

As we have seen, the current literature on time and temporality in the social sciences is essentially bifurcated. On one hand, historical institutionalists, operating primarily at the structural level, have made great strides in demonstrating the causal significance of social processes that are only traceable over the long run. On the other hand, social psychologists and behavioral economists, operating primarily at the individual level,

have increasingly demonstrated significant empirical variation in the ways in which human beings perceive and process time in decision-making. But any systematic links between individual and collective human temporality have thus far remained obscure.

The central problem we face here is that most social scientists who embrace methodological individualism also accept the axiom that human beings can be understood as utility maximizers; conversely, social scientists who reject the utility-maximization assumption also typically embrace structural rather than individual units of analysis. As I have argued elsewhere, the three grand paradigms of modern social science—Parsonian modernization theory, Marxism, and rational choice theory—can be understood as reflecting three of four logical positions within a matrix defined by two key theoretical choices: whether to begin with individual or collective units of analysis, and whether to understand human action as essentially strategic or essentially expressive (Hanson, 2010). Parsonian theory analyzes human society as consisting of collective expressive actors (i.e., sociocultural groups); Marxist theory analyzes society as a struggle between collective strategic actors (economic classes); and rational choice theory analyzes society as made up of individual strategic actors (rational decision-makers). Thus few social scientists have explored the fourth logically possible quadrant: namely, a methodological individualism that sees human actors as driven not only by instrumental rationality, but also by habitual, emotional, and ideational motivations. Yet this is precisely the empirical picture of human decision-making emerging from contemporary findings in social psychology and behavioral economics.

This more encompassing form of methodological individualism, I have argued elsewhere, underlies the sociological theory of Max Weber—which, as a result, has frequently been misinterpreted by scholars committed to the other three dominant paradigms (Hanson, 2010, 3–28). Upon closer examination, it is clear that Weber saw individual time orientations as a key element for understanding social action in various social contexts. Weber's famous typology of social action as motivated by habit, affect, and value rationality as well as instrumental rationality can also be portrayed deductively in terms of a 2×2 chart, with the *x*-axis defined by the degree of deliberation employed by actors—in Kahneman's terms, whether "system 1" or "system 2" is being used—and the *y*-axis defined by the degree to which temporal considerations are subjectively salient to the actor. The instrumental rationality assumed in neoclassical economic theory, which depends on actors' subjectively taking time into account and consistently employing a relatively high degree of deliberation, is from this perspective only one out of four possible types of individual action. Habitual action involves low degrees of deliberation about decisions with high temporal salience (for example, the desire to continue one's usual daily routine). Value-rational action involves high degrees of deliberation about decisions with low temporal salience (for example, which moral or ethical principles one should try to uphold over the course of one's lifetime). Affectual action involves low degrees of deliberation along with a low level of concern for temporal outcomes (for example, expressions of spontaneous anger, or actions taken during the subjective state of euphoria and dissociation produced by some narcotics).

From this theoretical point of view, rational choice models built on assumptions of individual utility-maximization are certainly useful—as Weber himself agreed—as long as the empirical social situation being analyzed is one in which we can typically expect that individual actors are both highly deliberative about their choices and concerned with outcomes in a relatively proximate time span. Consumer decision-making in competitive markets, for example, can typically be modeled very well using neoclassical assumptions, since on average those consumers who make purchases for principled reasons, or because of pure “impulse buying,” will be analytically insignificant in comparison with those who are driven primarily by instrumentally rational considerations of relative price and quality (although, as marketing professionals well know, both ethical and emotional considerations certainly can influence consumer preferences). When the institutional and social incentives underlying mass instrumental action in a given social setting are relatively stable, mathematical models defining equilibrium outcomes in which all actors are considered utility maximizers may describe local collective conditions with a fair degree of accuracy.

When social conditions are instead highly unpredictable due to institutional breakdown, social revolution, armed conflict, or other forms of sudden and unexpected change, however, forms of social action other than instrumental rationality can play an especially powerful causal role, and equilibrium models will therefore often be inadequate to explain social outcomes. Indeed, as social uncertainty grows, instrumentally rational actors should logically adopt higher discount rates in assessing promises of future gain, and previous patterns of collective action based on widely held expectations about institutional incentives and/or longer-term relationships of personal reciprocity should begin to break down due to free riding and opportunistic behavior. In such contexts, political elites who are able to persuade their followers to adopt any particular consensual view of the future are likely to gain a significant evolutionary advantage.

From this perspective, Weber’s three well-known types of legitimate domination—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal—can be analyzed as representing three possible solutions to the problem of how to forge new collective understandings of time in periods of social breakdown. “Traditional” elites promise salvation from the threat of continuing social uncertainty through a “return” to what are portrayed as “ancient” customs—an approach to building political legitimacy that can be effective even if, in fact, the “traditions” involved are largely invented (Weber, 1979; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). When traditional domination is successfully (re-)established in this way, time and history can appear to those who accept its legitimacy as having been “restored” to their “natural” state, providing a stable collective temporal framework undergirding everyday decisions motivated by habit and instrumentally rational action.

What Weber termed “charismatic domination”—that is, obedience to the leader that is justified among followers on the basis of his or her supposedly “extraordinary” qualities—relies on the mobilization of affect and value-rational principles to motivate collective action that appears subjectively to those swept up in it as “miraculous” and time-transcendent (Weber, 1979, 1111–1157). As Weber pointed out, the subjectively

extraordinary nature of charisma makes it extremely difficult to sustain over (objective) time. Many would-be charismatic leaders flame out quickly as their followers become disillusioned; charismatic domination can also decay rapidly if the original charismatic founder dies without establishing a clear successor. If successful, however, charismatic leadership can appear to renew history itself, providing a novel yet reliable basis on which to establish long-term expectations about the future.

Contrary to the views of some later interpreters, Weber never argued explicitly that charismatic leadership *per se* was doomed to disappear under conditions of modern economic development. Yet in social settings where the dominant understanding of time is abstract and linear, efforts to establish charismatic domination on the basis of novel principles and intense emotions do face a particular challenge: namely, skeptical observers can always predict that the miraculous promises of the leader will “eventually” fail to overcome social constraints. Only to the extent that followers subjectively believe that a new charismatic movement will actually put an end to all previously known human history, and usher in a qualitatively new temporal order, can a charismatic leader’s promises of transcendence be credible. This explains the remarkably enduring power of eschatological theologies in which believers are promised redemption at the “end of history,” when prophecies of final judgment are at last fulfilled. As the history of Christianity and Islam over the past two millennia amply shows, such belief systems are capable of repeatedly inspiring successful collective action in times of social crisis. For political elites trying to build new institutions in times of general social uncertainty, however, direct references to religious belief systems as a motivation for political mobilization can be problematic. If the time-bound world is seen as nothing more than a “vale of tears” to be discarded when true redemption comes, there would seem to be no good reason to undertake potentially costly individual action to try to change politics in the here and now.

We are now in a position to understand the peculiar power of political ideology as a mechanism for elongating individual time horizons and welding them into a shared picture of the political future. With the general spread of a universal time scale in which the Western linear calendar, international system of time zones, and abstract clock measurement of daily activity have become globally hegemonic, the notion that any particular political regime can be seen as a direct representation of God’s transcendent will on Earth has become increasingly hard to defend. In this context, political ideologies that specify a clear and consistent definition of the future political order in secular time can provide a powerful justification for eschewing short-term gains in favor of long-run collective goals. To the extent that converts accept an ideologically defined picture of the political future, they will share a belief in long-run cooperation with other converts. In a context of general social uncertainty in which most rational actors will adopt extremely high discount rates and thus reject promises of long-term benefits from political action, small groups of ideological “true believers” can gain a competitive advantage as they continue to act as if collective action in support of their favored future polity is rational. Political ideology in the modern era thus operates via a self-fulfilling prophecy: in chaotic social environments, ideologues who promise a radically new political future

to their followers gain an evolutionary advantage over nonideological politicians who cannot consistently defend any particular long-run vision.

This hypothesis about the evolutionary advantage of ideological “true believers” in competition with pragmatic “rational politicians” can be tested empirically. In a study of the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, I have shown how both Lenin and Stalin managed to outflank their rivals in the communist movement by arguing successfully that their preferred institutions and political strategies were faithful to Marx’s original understanding of revolutionary history. In particular, both Lenin’s “party of professional revolutionaries” and Stalin’s economic system of “heroic planning” combined a “scientific,” rational approach to time management with a “charismatic” impulse to transcend time through collective revolutionary action—a “charismatic-rational” approach to time that was remarkably consistent with Marx’s own views, and that had a deleterious effect on the later performance of the Soviet system over time (Hanson, 1997). Nor is the power of ideological belief unique to the twentieth-century Russian setting. As I have demonstrated through a careful comparison of party-building efforts in turbulent “postimperial democracies” in France, Germany, and post-Soviet Russia, under conditions of extremely high social uncertainty, clear and consistent ideological beliefs have typically been a necessary (although obviously not sufficient) condition for the formation of enduring party organizations (Hanson, 2010).

There is at least *prima facie* evidence, then, that individuals who adopt and disseminate clear and consistent ideological visions of the political future can play a crucial role in helping to determine regime outcomes during “critical junctures” caused by the breakdown of long-established institutions and social structures. In the modern era, leaders with what would seem to be an “irrational” confidence in their ability to prophesize the distant political future have often had relatively greater success in mobilizing collective action among their supporters than more “pragmatic” politicians—and thus have ended up in a position to shape that future later on. It also follows logically that as political elites in established democracies and autocracies alike abandon previously powerful ideological belief systems, a reverse dynamic of increasing political opportunism will typically emerge. Once most people are convinced that all politicians are purely cynical and opportunistic, anyone who sacrifices his or her own short-term interest on behalf of the political collective will be rightly perceived as a “sucker”—making it instrumentally rational for everyone to defect from all further efforts to mobilize collective political action. This sort of dynamic may help explain why the decline of twentieth-century political ideologies such as Leninism, liberalism, Christian democracy, and social democracy has been accompanied by a concomitant decline in the cohesion and mobilizing power of long-established political parties. The “end of ideological history” proclaimed by Fukuyama at the end of the Cold War has thus engendered not an era of technocratic rationality, but instead a general loss of confidence in the political future (Fukuyama, 1989). If so, our relative inattention to the subjective time orientations of political actors has obscured a fundamentally important dynamic of the contemporary era.

CONCLUSION

This essay has endeavored to show that recent efforts to “bring time back in” to political science have helped to uncover some very fruitful lines of inquiry in the discipline. Yet much more work along these lines will be needed to understand more precisely how individuals’ subjective understandings of time interact with large-scale temporal structures that have been identified by historical institutionalists. In this connection, a whole series of research questions arises. Why do some marginalized children grow up with only a limited ability to plan for the future, while others experiencing similar forms of marginalization are prone to join ideological and religious movements requiring great self-discipline to bring about desired political ends? Can neuroscience eventually identify particular brain patterns that are associated with subjective understandings of time, such as the belief in “time transcendence” found among believers in some charismatic movements? Why do some periods of relative economic uncertainty lead to radical time discounting of the sort evident in bouts of hyperinflation and sharply rising interest rates, while in other economic crises, inflation and interest rates remain relatively low (implicitly demonstrating collective confidence in the long-run future of currently dominant currencies and the political institutions backing them)? These are only a few of the subjects that might be profitably pursued by political scientists, behavioral economists, and social psychologists interested in the intersections of individual and structural temporality.

Beyond opening up new areas of research, however, this review of the literature highlights the need to be more explicit about the temporal assumptions underlying social science theories themselves. The long-standing social scientific quest to determine equilibrium models that, in their ability to abstract from all contingent, time-bound considerations, might seemingly one day reveal “timeless” scientific laws of politics, has unfortunately tended to hinder our progress toward understanding the inherently historical dynamics of actual human political institutions. As the works of scholars such as Pierson, Mahoney, Thelen, Grzymala-Busse, and Jacobs have convincingly shown, abandoning this Laplacian dream need not result in an unscientific free-for-all in which *any* hypothesis can be defended by including enough temporal (and spatial) scope conditions. Instead, it is time to recognize that the social sciences are essentially a branch of evolutionary biology, not a new form of social physics. Our subject matter is inherently temporal—like all the life sciences, subject to the arrow of time given by the Second Law of Thermodynamics (Prigogine and Stengers, 2017).

Yet as Weber emphasized more than a century ago, the social sciences also must take explicitly into account the unusual cognitive capacities of *Homo sapiens*. Humans, unlike other animals, are able to conceptualize time itself, in ways that can systematically affect social outcomes. This brainpower gives us the ability to see time as an abstract line extending uniformly from the distant past to the indefinite future—a time orientation that is in many ways a necessary assumption for the development of modern science

itself (Kant, [1781] 1998). The repeated validation of scientific hypotheses built on the assumption of linear, measurable time over the course of the past several centuries gives us confidence that understanding time in this way provides a reliable epistemological foundation for understanding objective reality. But we must not make the mistake of assuming that all social actors will necessarily always approach time “scientifically” in this way. As Weber taught, the social sciences are compelled to take into account the subjective orientations of human actors themselves through interpretive understanding (*verstehen*). Indeed, there is a growing body of anthropological and historical evidence that those who consistently embrace a purely secular notion of linear, abstract time are a distinct minority. Analyzing the politics of temporality scientifically, then, requires us to examine the emergence, institutionalization, and decline of various subjective, collective “time maps” along a rational, divisible time scale—a time scale that we ultimately must recognize is itself is a human invention, however desirable and worth defending (Elias, 1992; Zerubavel, 2003).

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CHAPTER 10

VARIETIES OF TIME IN COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

MARCUS KREUZER

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

—William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*

“There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.”

—Lenin (attributed)

TIME has the potential to surprise, confound, and eventually enhance our understanding of social phenomena—if we take it seriously.¹ It provides an important corrective to our presentism bias. We value our corporations based on the quarterly earnings rather than their long-term stewardship of the communities in which they operate; we judge politicians on their latest poll numbers rather than their life-long public service record; and we define happiness by the speed with which our desires are satisfied rather than the time-honored values that sustain it. Psychologists have demonstrated that this presentism bias is deeply engrained in our cognitive processes. We discount the future, easily misremember the past, and reconstruct it by reading history backward from the present. This inattention to time has important implications for what sort of questions we pose, what sort of answers we find, and how valid they end up being. Arguably, few understand the implications of this temporal illiteracy better than the Canadian journalist Malcolm Gladwell, whose writings and podcast “Revisionist History” foreground the temporal dynamics and historical processes that many conventional explanations overlook. In his best-selling book *Outliers*, he challenges the conventional talent myth, that is widely used to explain the success of allegedly overachieving business titans, for ignoring the confounding effects of time. Drawing on a wide array of social science research, he demonstrates that various elements of time played a central role in their

success. Outliers typically practice at least 10,000 hours before reaching a high level of proficiency, benefit from being born earlier in the calendar year, draw on cultural legacies, or take advantage of historically unique business opportunities (2008).

In foregrounding these temporal factors, Gladwell, in effect, follows the tried and true playbook that *comparative historical analysis* (CHA) employs. Comparative historical analysis is part of a long research tradition that goes back to Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim as they sought to make sense of their rapidly changing nineteenth century. Karl Polanyi, Barrington Moore, Charles Tilly, and Reinhard Bendix revived the traditions after World War II. Since then, Theda Skocpol, William Sewell, Andrew Abbott, Ronald Aminzade, and Jack Goldstone carried it on in sociology; Thomas Ertman, Stein Rokkan, James Mahoney, Kathleen Thelen, Paul Pierson, David Collier, and Ruth Collier in comparative politics; Stephen Skowronek, Karren Orren, Richard Bense, and Ira Katznelson in American politics; and Ernst Haas, Peter Katzenstein, Emmanuel Wallerstein, Martha Finnemore, and Michael Trachtenberg in international relations.

These and many other scholars define the substantive and analytical contours of CHA. Substantively, they all explore in one form or another, questions that relate to the advent of the modern nation-state, capitalist markets, representative institutions, modern warfare, changing identities, and transnational processes. They contend that analyzing the origins of these respective phenomena is key for understanding the continued transformation of contemporary societies, politics, and modernity more generally (Skocpol, 1984; Adams et al., 2005; Møller, 2016). Analytically, these authors define CHA by placing time at the center of their analysis. They contest the notion that phenomena are made up of stable units with fixed attributes but contend instead, that they are unfolding from the past and are continuously transforming the present. The nineteenth century night-watch state, with national markets, limited democracy, cavalry-based armies, and patriarchal gender roles is fundamentally different from the twenty-first-century welfare state, embedded in global markets, governed by liberal democracies, increasingly challenged by transnational terrorist and environmental threats and populated by an ever more pluralistic and inclusive population. To understand such transformations *through* time, a clearly defined and differentiated temporal vocabulary is essential.

However, the analytical contours of CHA are fuzzy because its conceptualization of time is not always as systematic as it could be. CHA uses a rich but analytically vague temporal vocabulary. It uses terms like “temporality,” “synchronicity,” “critical junctures,” “historicity,” “path dependency,” “time series,” “change,” “sequencing,” “timing,” “development,” and “history” without precisely defining and differentiating them. This lack of semantic clarity is unfortunate because it impedes the dialogue among CHA scholars, muddles the distinctiveness of CHA, and obscures different traditions within CHA. In short, CHA’s imprecise temporal vocabulary places it where the study of space found itself before the invention of cartography or language prior to the formalization of grammar—their rudimentary elements were tacitly understood but not sufficiently explicated to permit more systematic analysis.

This chapter elucidates more fully the temporal foundations of CHA by conceptually lumping various attributes of time into the two categories of time suggested by the opening two epigrams. Faulkner and Lenin both talk about time in general terms, but on closer inspection they reference two very distinct notions. To Lenin, the past and the present are disconnected from the calendar, interchangeable, and thus not separated by irreversible changes. The thing that distinguishes them is not the extent of qualitative change differentiating two different historical contexts, but the tempo at which historical events unfold. He embraces, therefore, a more *physical notion of time* that treats time as a set of context-independent, measurable variables and focuses on its clock-like attributes like tempo, duration, sequencing (e.g., before and after), and timing (e.g., early, late).² By contrast, Faulkner compares the present to the past and explores how it has or has not changed. He employs essentially a *historical notion of time* because he invites the reader to compare historical contexts, explore how the past shaped the present, and analyze how similar or dissimilar it is from the present.

This chapter explicates more fully on the distinction between *physical time* and *historical time*. First, it reviews how CHA's conceptualization of time has evolved, how its uses of physical and historical time informed its analysis, and how the insufficient conceptual distinction between them has led to periodic misunderstandings. Second, the chapter demarcates CHA's uses of physical and historical time from their uses in other social science literatures. Comparative historical analysis does not have a monopoly on analyzing physical and historical time but differs from other disciplines by using physical and historical time *simultaneously*. It therefore is distinct from traditional history, which pays little attention to physical time, and differs from the various uses of time in sociology, economics, or psychology which background historical time. The two notions of time therefore help to delineate the intellectual terrain within which CHA operates. Finally, this chapter uses physical and historical time to distinguish strands of CHA that combine the two elements of time in distinct ways. This differentiation updates Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers' influential distinction between three types of CHA (1980). Together, these three sections should provide a helpful baseline for further analysis of how CHA uses time.

DIFFERENTIATING PHYSICAL AND HISTORICAL TIME

Differentiating physical and historical time is complicated by the fact that all history is temporal but not all time is necessarily historical. The hours in a day or days or weeks in a year are temporal by helping us understand the rhythm at which time unfolds, these units of time are not historical because they are recurring and not tied to a specific context whose comparison across time helps us understand change through time and hence historical time. It therefore is not always clear what aspects of time are historical and

what aspects are not historical and how to label those nonhistorical elements of time. This insufficient differentiation between physical and historical time is perplexing because the two notions are latent in much of the CHA work. Before the 1980s, CHA scholars intuitively used these two notions of time without conceptually differentiating between them. More recently, scholars have offered analytical differentiations that marked a major step forward (Aminzade, 1992; Sewell, 1996; Abbott, 2001; Zerubavel, 2003; Pierson, 2004; Grzymala-Busse, 2011). I build on these efforts by treating these differentiations in a more symmetrical fashion. Currently, individual scholars often favor one notion of time over the other; they concentrate on either physical or historical time without fully contrasting them and systematically explicating their differences. This section first looks at this asymmetrical treatment and then conceptualizes the two notions of time more symmetrically.

Asymmetrical Treatment of Time

In recent decades, a number of scholars have paid closer attention to differences between physical and historical notions of time but treated them in an asymmetrical manner as they champion the one that was most compatible with their theoretical priors. This asymmetrical treatment of time has impeded a clearer understanding of the distinct analytical tasks they face in CHA. It also ignores that most empirical CHA works combined both notions of time and show little interest in linking CHA to a single notion of time.

The scholars favoring physical time do so because they are interested in its more generalizable attributes; they aspire, as Kathleen Thelen nicely puts it, to “capture the impact of time in as timeless a manner as possible” (2000, 1001 fn 4). Paul Pierson champions particularly sequences and timing as two more objective elements of time. He simultaneously criticizes scholars of American political development (APD) for being too historical and “simply pilling one [study] upon another” (2004, 5 fn 4). Stefano Bartolini also prefers physical time because tempo and duration are more measurable than historical time (1993, 130–136). Similarly, Andrew Abbott (1995), Eric Nordlinger, (1968) and Tulia Falleti and James Mahoney (2015) draw special attention to various forms of sequences and how they can be systematically studied. These scholars thus aspire to define CHA primarily in terms of physical time, and they consequently do not elaborate on how this notion of time differs from historical time.

In turn, scholars championing historical time treat time just as asymmetrically. Ronald Aminzade writes that clearer temporal concepts are essential “for development of more event-centered approach to historical sociology and to provide substantive content to our understanding of historical time” (1992, 458). He then discusses four temporal concepts without pointing out that two are historical (i.e., cycles and trajectories), while two others are related to physical time (i.e., duration and tempo). William Sewell draws a stark distinction between three temporalities: teleological, experimental, and eventful. He stacks the deck in favor of eventful temporality by

dismissing the first two for being ahistorical. But he never addresses the role duration, tempo, or sequences play in CHA (1996). Philip Abrams's intellectual genealogy of historical sociology (1982) explicates its historical pedigrees, Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek discuss the concepts that APD uses to analyze the historical transformation of American political institutions (2004), and Terrence McDonald answers the question "What do we talk when we talk about history?" (1996). All these scholars provide important insights into historical time without, however, paying attention to the role that sequencing, timing, duration, or tempo play in CHA in complementing the analysis of historical time.

These asymmetrical treatments of time have produced a conceptual cul-de-sac that is unfortunate but also understandable given the complex nature of time. It therefore is helpful to step outside CHA and draw on work by historians of time for a possible solution to this conceptual conundrum. Historians of time have long studied how our understanding of time has evolved over the ages and ultimately how these understandings have given rise to physical, historical, and other conceptions of time. Their work helpfully points to what scholars call *time-reckoning devices*, which were used at different moments in the past to construct distinct notions of time. It shows that clocks are not the only way to reckon time, but that they were preceded and followed by other methods for defining time. These time-reckoning devices involved cultural norms, natural periodicities, and ultimately technologies that societies established to recognize particular types of time. They also point to concrete temporal attributes that can give conceptual coherence to something as elusive as time. Eviatar Zerubavel, who is among the most insightful scholars on time, points to the conceptual leverage that such time reckoning devices offer. He argues that time reckoning testifies to humans' "ability to calibrate subjective temporal formulations in accordance with a single standard yardstick. This presupposes the convertibility of subjective formulations of the duration of events and of their location in time into a *standard time language*, into terms that have the same meaning for others as they do for their users. Standardizing temporal reference presupposes a *standard system of units of time*, which enable different people to measure the passage of time in an identical manner, and a *standard time-reckoning and dating framework*, which allows them to date any past, present, or future instant in a common fashion" (1982, 2, original in italics).

What then are the time reckoning devices that define physical and historical time?

Physical Time

Physical time is more homogeneous and context-independent than historical time and encompasses clocklike, measurable attributes that permit it to be treated as a variable and something that is easily compared across cases. It is defined by four attributes: duration, tempo, timing, and sequencing. They all are linked to time-reckoning devices that are based on natural periodicities or clocks and as such can be said to have a natural, physical, or at least materialist foundation.

Duration and Tempo

Duration and tempo are the most immediately measurable elements of physical time because they are linked to clocks (Aminzade, 1992, 460–462; Grzymala-Busse, 2011, 1277–1285). The goal of clocks was to make time-reckoning more mechanical, more precise, more independent of calendars and to ultimately create temporal units of analysis that can be compared and measured across cases. Elizabeth Cohen investigates how political and legal procedures rely on duration to determine election or census intervals, citizenship eligibility, or sentencing guidelines. She shows how the measurable, and hence seemingly impartial, nature of duration both legitimates those procedures and becomes a source of hidden biases (2018, 1–21; Howlett, and Goetz, 2014). Karen Barkey points out that the Ottoman Empire limited the duration of local administrators and randomized their appointments to preempt the development of local administrative networks that could challenge the state's central authority (1996). Stefano Bartolini compares the tempo with which the franchise was expanded across various countries (2000, 206–221). Ron Hassner looks at the role tempo and duration play in territorial disputes. He explains the varying tempi with which countries entrench themselves in newly acquired territories in terms of the geographic constraints they faced and the symbolic significance of the territory itself (2007, 127–138). He then points out that the tempo of this entrenchment process affects the duration of ensuing conflict with the country from which the territory was taken.

Sequencing

The time reckoning mechanism for sequencing originally involved natural periodicities that served to reckon time before calendars or clocks. These natural periodicities involve the sequence between day and night or the seasons. These rudimentary sequential differentiations were appropriate for agricultural-based societies with few temporal obligations and where events, dictated by nature and the weather, were irregular and unpredictable (Landes, 1983, 25). Such societies were unconcerned with tracking, let alone measuring time. Their concern was simply to mark the recurring order of social events by linking them to recurring natural periodicities (Landes, 1983, 18). Just like natural periodicities, it is easy to recognize sequences in the social world because it necessitates little more than figuring out the order of two or more events and whether this order varied across cases. Sequencing compares the temporal ordering of pairs of events and the range over which this ordering can vary. Paul Pierson illustrates sequencing in analogy to cooking where the proper order of using ingredients affects the tastiness of the final meal. Tulia Falleti argues that the sequence of administrative, fiscal, and political decentralization determines the degree of autonomy of subnational units of government (2005). Robert Dahl's contestation-inclusion sequence arguably is the most famous example. He argues that democratizations in which limited elite contestation, permitted by rule of law, a free press, and freedom of association, preceded universal male suffrage were more stable than democratizations with the reverse sequence. He contends that the contest-inclusion sequence made it easier to develop norms of

compromise because competition involved smaller and more homogeneous groups of actors (1971).

Timing

The time-reckoning mechanism for timing is the calendar, which is benchmarked in turn against astronomical regularities. The rotations of the earth and sun offered units of time “where natural periodicity (at least roughly) led to natural (and convenient) time intervals” (Hand, 2016, 49). Calendars thus became the tool for helping to make the timing of planetary events, religious festivities, holidays, and birthdays knowable in advance. Timing carries this function into CHA as it serves to identify associations between variations of when a category of events happens and variations in the outcome that those different timings produce. The when in timing typically involves ordinal distinctions between early and late of singular events across cases and thus is distinct from sequencing, which focuses on variations in the temporal ordering of pairwise events across cases. Sociologists, for example, found that sentencing taking place early in the day and later in the afternoon result in more lenient sentences than those taking place around mid-day. Similarly, students perform better when exams are timed early and late in the day rather than mid-day. Sociologists explain these effects because the timing of the sentencing or exam-taking interacts with the biological clocks of judges or students to produce these varied outcomes (Pink, 2018). Bartolini identifies the countries that expanded the franchise first and uses this baseline to differentiate the later timing of countries that subsequently expanded the franchise (2000). Alexander Gerschenkron discovered that the timing of industrialization profoundly affected its tempo as late industrializers can learn from early industrializers (1962). They then can use this knowledge to develop their economies more quickly. Various IR scholars discuss timing in terms of religious holidays. They found that such holidays reduce the violence in civil conflicts because actors were more likely to face normative disapproval for committing acts of violence on days set aside for religious commemoration (Hassner, 2011; Reese et al., 2017). The timing of religious holidays thus reduces violence because on those days the preexisting religious norms against such violence are stronger than on regular days.

Historical Time

Historical time is less heterogeneous, less modular, less context-independent, and less mechanical than physical time. It is instead defined by the goal to compare phenomena across chronological time and to explore the extent they changed over a given time-span. Historical time rests on the notion that the past is “not just prior to the present but also different from it” and that the unfolding of time is irreversible (Schiffman, 2011, 2). The task of historical analysis therefore is to study those qualitative differences across time and explore whether those changes follow patterns and thus could also be said to have a direction. Historical time consequently focuses on studying a single or

small number of cases across time to capture such continuities and discontinuities; it is less interested in the variations of temporal dimensions across cases. Its units of analysis involve events, larger scale periods, or even bigger epochs (Abbott, 1991; Sewell, 1996; Zerubavel, 2003).

This focus on how different the past is from the present links historical time to four time reckoning devices: chronologies, events, periodizations, and direction. First, historical time is tied to *chronologies*, annals, or town chronicles, which are essentially calendric devices for dating when an occurrence happened in the past and sorting out their chronological order. For a long time, chronologies served important political, economic, and religious functions. Genealogical chronicling legitimated claims to the throne and other hereditary privileges (Toulmin and Goodfield, 1982); religious chronicling address eschatological questions about the apocalypse (Rosenberg and Grafton, 2010, 44); and the chronicles in the farmer almanacs coordinated market days and guided farmers when to plant. The function of such chronicles, however, changed with the gradual emergence of a historical consciousness during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the past was different from the present. The emphasis of chronologies on dating and order of occurrences was too mechanical to analyze how those differences in dates translated into qualitative changes. Historians thus supplemented them with events, periodizations, and direction (Hunt, 2008, 52; Rosenberg, and Grafton, 2010, 138).

Second, *events* are central temporal units of analysis in historical analysis because they convert the mere historical occurrences recorded by chronicles into analytically relevant, dated, and purposively selected events. Identifying events is distinct from the traditional case selection because it entails “casing.” Traditional case selection involves selecting a case from a larger population with known frequency distributions and to use the case to draw inferences for the larger population. This logic does not extend to identifying historical events because their changing nature means that they lack common features with other events—events are not part of larger populations of events with shared attributes but they are embedded and linked in chronological process (Becker, 1998, 123; Soss, 2018). The point of casing then is to compare contexts in all of their complexity, identify both their similarities and differences, and ultimately demarcate events according to how those similarities and differences clustered over time (Locke and Thelen, 1995; Schaffer, 2018). Third, *periodization schemes* serve to “identify and name coherent time intervals” (Heirich, 1964, 388) and identify broader patterns of historical continuity and discontinuity based on patterns that events form. They try to synchronize “temporal rhythm” of more subjective human experiences with the objective chronological order of calendars (Koselleck, 2002, 110). Fourth, *direction* involves stepping back from periodization schemes and asking whether the historical patterns that they describe also follow an overarching direction. The term “direction” here does not have a precise technical definition but serves as an umbrella term for efforts to explicate from the periodization patterns some larger, oftentimes normatively tinged metanarratives about the direction of historical change. This propensity to ascribe directionality to historical change is most clearly evident in the nineteenth century,

optimistic, Whiggish, and hence teleological accounts of history that carried over into modernization theory (Butterfield, 1965).

Comparative historical analysis combines these four elements of historical time in different ways and ultimately employs five distinct notions of historical time that vary in their thickness and rest on different theoretical notions of how the past is linked to the present (Kreuzer and Pettai, 2004).

Past the Same as the Present

The thinnest version of historical time treats the past being prior to the present but not being qualitatively different. The past differs from the present solely in terms of its chronological coordinates, and those different coordinates are inconsequential. Different moments in the past have the same frequentist ontological standing as cross-sectional cases and thus permit using the past to increase the number of observations. These moments are not treated as events that provide potential insights into how the past is different from the present. CHA rightly criticizes this treatment of the past as being ahistorical because history becomes little more “than a site to generate more data” (Pierson, 2004, 5). The past-the-same-as the present thus plays no role in CHA other than to set it apart from none-CHA approaches.

Past as Historically Situated Causal Pathway

The past as causal pathway treats the past as a repository of causal factors that it then arrays along a causal pathway. Past serves to elongate the timescale along which causes and effects are observed in order to provide a richer temporal explanation. In *Outliers*, Gladwell extends the timescale backward and finds that explanations emphasizing the talent of highly successful individuals overlook important other more long-term antecedent factors that together constitute a more complex temporal pathway. The causal pathways also are linked to historical contexts in the sense that causes and effects are subject to historical boundary conditions. The past as causal pathways, however, does not compare historical events or contexts to analyze qualitative changes across time through periodization schemes or looking for directionality in historical change.

Past as Multiple Events

The past as multiple events splits and lumps historical events into chronological containers so that they can be compared against each other for how little or much a phenomenon changed over time. The chronological containers most typically are periods that permit historical comparisons. They are essential for describing and understanding the complex, qualitative changes before attempting to explain them. French political historians, for example, lump key events into five different republics as well as various intervening, nonrepublic periods. Such periodization schemes simultaneously are the end result as well as the analytical tool through which historians compare the past. Unlike concepts, periods are not fixed but their starting and end points are adjusted depending on when the scholar identifies critical junctures of rapid and large-scale change or legacy periods during which institutions, norms, and structures

reproduced themselves and thus remain largely unchanged. French cultural history, for example, would be broken in a very different periodization scheme because its artistic styles unfolded in a different pattern than its constitutional order. There are no set standards for how to truncate the past into periods but periods typically demarcated continuities and discontinuities either in an individual country or across multiple ones (Haydu, 1998; Kersh, 2005).

Past as Unfolding in a Particular Direction

The detection of continuities and discontinuities invites reflections about possible patterns and the direction in which the past is unfolding. The notion of historical change having a direction is closely linked to evolutionary theory and the idea of human progress. This frequently contributed to overly linear and at times also teleological accounts of historical change. Such accounts are too deterministic and do not enjoy a great deal of respect among historians (Butterfield, 1965; Sewell, 1996). However, many historical accounts avoid such deterministic accounts. APD, for example, evaluates American history in terms of whether or not it expands the liberal promise of its founding or assesses periods in terms of divergence from earlier periods (Orren and Skowronek, 2004). German historians regularly ponder whether its history converged with that of other European countries or whether it followed an exceptionalist *Sonderweg* (Blackbourn and Eley, 1984; Kreuzer, 2003). Global historians, in turn, debate to what extent globalization can be equated with Westernization or not (Conrad, 2017). Historical analysis thus employs a range of different directional templates to characterize the nature of historical change.

The next section uses this differentiation between physical time to generate a time map that permits differentiating CHA from other non-CHA research traditions as well as identifying three distinct strands of CHA.

TIME MAP: DIFFERENTIATING CHA FROM NON-CHA APPROACHES

Physical and historical time provide the two axes for Figure 10.1. The vertical axis ordinally maps how many elements of physical time a particular scholar employs in her analysis and thus permits differentiating the thickness with which physical time is treated. The horizontal axis, in turn, distinguishes between the five different notions of historical time ordinally differentiating the thickness of historical time. The dotted arch separates CHA from non-CHA works.

The area outside the dotted arch, that extends from the NW to SE corners of Figure 10.1, underscores that CHA has no monopoly on analyzing time. Some non-CHA works focus on physical time but pay no attention to historical time, while others analyze historical time but largely ignore physical time. These works, in turn, differ from

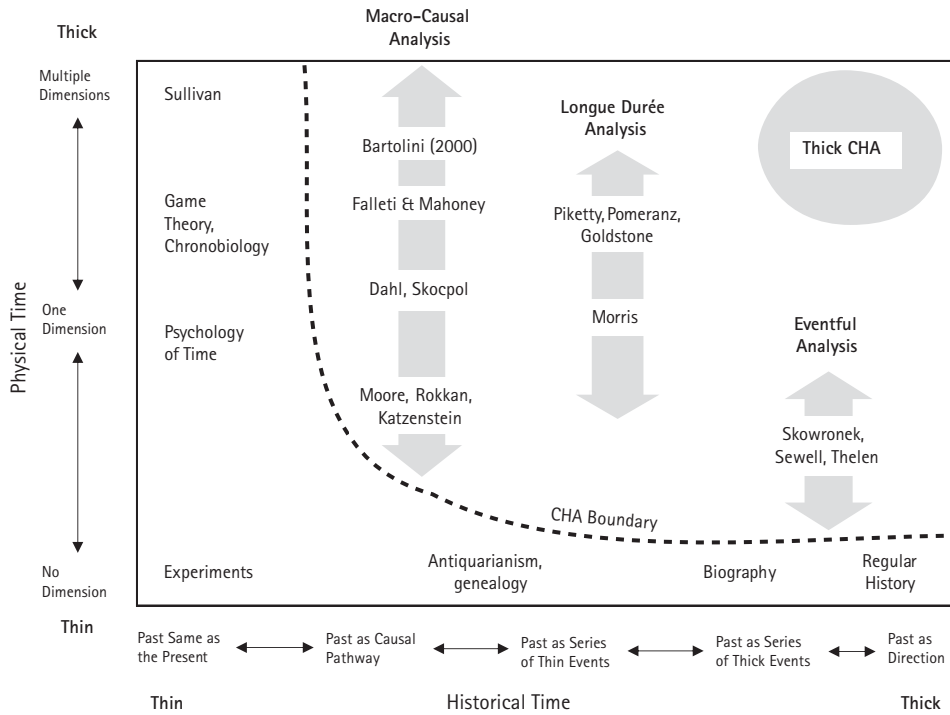


FIGURE 10.1: Time map.

experimental research, situated in the SW corner, which incorporates neither physical nor historical time and thus is genuinely timeless. Experimental works background time by assuming that randomization controls for any causal effects of physical or historical time. It assumes that evidence is uniform in the sense that individual observations are homogeneous across the entire population from which they are drawn. It further asserts that evidence is independent in that earlier observations do not interact with later ones through some learning or legacy effects (Hall, 2003). Time only matters in the elementary sense that the cause has to be prior to the effect.

Figure 10.1 underscores that CHA's distinctness rests on configuring both physical *and* historical time and thus employing a richer notion of time. The distinct ways in which scholars configure these two notions of time define three strands of CHA: macrocausal, *longue durée*, and eventful analysis. These strands are updated versions of Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers's original threefold typology (1980). The slightly different labels used here are meant to convey their newer, more explicitly temporal conceptualization.³ Macrocausal, *longue durée*, and eventful analysis are primarily defined by the thickness of historical notions of time, which determines their location on the horizontal axis. The works within each of these strands vary, in turn, in the thickness of their treatment of physical time and thus show that physical and historical time can be configured in different ways. The longer arrow for macrocausal and *longue durée*

analysis indicates that their respective notions of historical time are more readily configured with elements of physical time. Eventful analysis, by contrast, employs such a qualitative and hence rich notion of historical time, that it becomes more difficult to generalize elements of physical time. There appears to be a trade-off between the thickness of these two notions of time, but hypothetically, there is nothing that prevents paying equal attention to both elements of time and thus producing a genuinely thick CHA indicated in the upper right-hand corner. Before elaborating on the three strands of CHA in the next section, this section briefly discusses the use of time in non-CHA literature.

Physical time is studied in a surprisingly large number of social science literatures. Psychologists explore time perceptions; game theorists look how time horizons and choice sequences affect outcomes; sociologists study how equitably spouses divide housework or how many hours people work (Nowotny, 1975; Wajcman, 2015); institutional and legal scholars analyze the timing of elections, the length of office terms, the statute of limitations and other legally prescribed time intervals (Jacobs, 2008; Howlett and Goetz, 2014; Cohen, 2018); and chronobiology evaluates how the biological clock influences cognitive abilities across the day. These literatures all ignore the past outright or assume that it is similar to the present. The differences separating the past from the present are reversible and the past becomes “perennial now” (Eliade, 1949, 85). These studies treat moments in the past as the equivalent of cross-sectional cases.

These literatures, in turn, vary in how many elements of physical time they incorporate in their analysis. The number of elements they use determines where they are plotted along the vertical axis in Figure 10.1. Psychological studies of time perception or time budgeting typically focus only on the duration of time. Game theory is a bit more complex because it combines sequencing and time horizons (i.e., duration). Similarly, chronobiology treats physical time in a more complex manner because it considers the timing as well as the interplay between biological and physical (i.e., the day) time processes. These works illustrate that physical time is modular and can be combined in different ways. It is relatively rare, though, to find studies that analyze more than two elements of physical time. Frank Sulloway’s famous *Born to Rebel* provides one such exception. The book explores the effects that birth orders have on individuals’ willingness to innovate, accept new ideas, or more broadly rebel. He collected data on 3,890 scientists, who were involved in 28 different scientific discoveries (1996, 28). Birth order is his principle temporal sequence, which differentiates between first-born and later-born siblings. Sulloway contends that first-borns receive more attention and consequently become more conformist, status quo oriented than their later-borns, who compete for their parents’ attention by rebelling (1996, 20–24). He claims that this sibling competition for parents’ attention generates lifelong cognitive mindsets that determine individuals’ openness to new experiences. Sulloway then moves beyond that strictly temporal birth order and analyzes how birth orders interact with duration and tempo. He finds that duration has an interaction effect with the birth order sequence. He treats birth orders no longer as a strictly ordinal sequence because he now also measures the effect that the time lag (i.e., duration) between the first and second-born might

have. He finds that rebelliousness of later-borns who are more than six years younger disappears because after that time period they no longer compete with the older siblings for the parents' attention (1996, 22–23). He also discovers interesting generational effects whereby the birth order effect interacts with the age of individuals. He shows that increased age diminishes the rebellious effects of being a later-born and vice versa (1996, 34–36). Or, he finds that the birth order effect diminishes over the course of a scientific innovation as a new theory becomes more accepted (1996, 45). And Sulloway even manages to incorporate tempo in his analysis. He differentiates the various scientific revolutions in terms of their radicalism, that is the tempo, with which they overturned existing scholarly consensus. And he finds that the birth order effect was far stronger for scientific innovations that change conventional wisdom quickly rather than slowly (1996, 330–333).

Traditional historical analysis employs very thick notions of historical time, but rarely pays close attention to physical time as a distinct analytical category. Political, diplomatic, economic, global, and social history vary significantly in what they study, the time scales they employ, their epistemological orientations, and complexity of their periodization schemes (Hunt, 2014). But they all employ a very thick notion of historical time and forego more explicit analysis of physical time. Such historians frequently illustrate their thick treatment of historical time by contrasting them with antiquarianism or chronicling as diminished forms of historical analysis. They use “antiquarianism” as a pejorative term to refer to historical analysis that is too preoccupied with dates and chronologies and that devotes insufficient attention to the complexities of historical contexts and how they change over time. David Hackett Fischer lampooned one, apparently memorably antiquarian, by describing her as a small-town New England Puritan virgin who was diligently at work in the local historical society to chronicle the “story of her home town from 1633 to 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated, and history came to an end” (1970, 141). The difference between antiquarianism and regular historical analysis is akin to the difference between genealogy and biographies. Genealogies focus on birth and deaths to chronicle the complete lineage of families into the past, whereas biographies focus on only a discreet stage in this lineage so that they can contextualize it and explore how an individual or families changed through time.

VARIANTS OF COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Comparative historical analysis differs from other forms of social inquiry, that incorporate elements of either physical or historical time, by combining these two elements in complex ways. The efforts to configure physical and historical time are partially driven by the temporal complexities that define the macrohistorical questions posed by CHA as well as whether a scholar employs more quantitative or qualitative methodologies. The

results of these configuration efforts define three broad strands of CHA: macrocausal, *longue durée*, and eventful analysis. This section elaborates on these three strands and their particular treatments of physical and historical time.

Macrocausal Analysis

Macrocausal analysis is arguably the oldest and most prominent strand of CHA, and provides the template for many of its classics. It typically starts with cross-sectional variations of a macrophenomenon and then retraces the historical processes that produced those different outcomes. Comparative historical analysis explains cross-sectional variations in the types of nation-states, revolutions (Skocpol, 1979; Goldstone, 1993), broad regime outcomes (Moore, 1966; Collier-Berins and Collier, 1991; Luebbert, 1991), post-colonial legacies (Lange, 2009; Mahoney, 2010), welfare state arrangements (e.g., social democratic, liberal, catholic) (Esping-Andersen, 1990), varieties of capitalism (e.g., liberal versus coordinate market economies) (Katzenstein, 1985; Hall, and Soskice, 2001), or differences in mid-twentieth-century or postcommunist party systems (e.g., nature of cleavage structures) (Rokkan, 1968; Kitschelt et al., 1999).

Macrocausal analysis is deeply influenced by Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966). Moore challenged the overly linear, and teleological analysis of the then dominant modernization theory by pointing out that, by the early twentieth century, countries had followed three separate roads into political modernity—fascism, communism, and democracy. He further challenged modernization's functionalist explanations by emphasizing the causal complexity and temporal dynamics that produced those outcomes. He used history in two ways. First, he treated history as a repository for overlooked causal factors that could help produce causally more complex and, hence, internally more valid explanations. Second, Moore used the past as a causal pathway for arraying those causal factors and paying closer attention to their temporal interactions over time. These two uses imply a thin conception of history because they are not interested in how the past is different from the present. The outcomes that Moore analyzes are static, as he explains cross-sectional variations in those outcomes that take place at a singular moment in the past. He does not study how liberal democracy, fascism, or communism emerged from earlier regime types and then retraces the historical process that brought those transformations about. Moore's analysis ultimately is historical only in the sense that the antecedent factors are tied to and therefore bounded by a historical context. Macrocausal works typically copied Moore's treatment of the past as a causal pathway and thereby testified to the enormous influence of his work.

Moore paid little attention to physical time compared to subsequent macrocausal scholars. These scholars refined his analytical frameworks by drawing closer attention to the role duration, tempo, timing, and sequencing played in structuring causal pathways (Aminzade, 1992; Sewell, 1996; Grzymala-Busse, 2011). Paul Pierson assumed a particularly important role in exploring the role that physical time plays in

understanding temporally complex causal processes. He contends that many social science explanations have a short/short temporal structure because they pay attention only to antecedents occurring in close temporal proximity to the outcomes to be explained. They also treat the outcomes themselves as single snapshots rather than processes that unfold over time (2003). He contends that this short/short structure is temporally too thin to analyze the role that duration, tempo, timing, and sequencing play. It constitutes an ontological simplification that backgrounds physical as well as historical time, and in effect stipulates a notion of time in which the units of analysis are homogeneous and independent across time and space.

Macrocausal analysis pays attention to physical time in two distinct ways. First, scholars incorporate elements of physical time as explanatory factors. The works cited in the section “Physical Time” illustrate this use of physical time and are mapped on Figure 10.1. Bartolini includes tempo, duration, and timing of the franchise expansion and thus provides a particularly thick treatment of physical time. The other works use just a single element of physical time. Second, scholars incorporate elements of physical time in broader theoretical frameworks. The work on path dependency or the literature on critical junctures can be understood as generalizing about particular causal pathways that can be broken down into short, fast-moving phases followed by longer, slower-moving ones (Pierson, 2000; Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). Similarly, Falletti and Mahoney have tried to think more systematically about sequences and how they interact with tempo (2015). These efforts to theoretically capture physical time are part of a larger effort, that extends beyond CHA, to formulate explanations that are causally more complex than standard variance-based explanations. These efforts involve explicating more fully causal mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen, 2013), making allowances for equifinality (e.g., same outcome explained by different factors) (Ragin, 1987), and accommodating asymmetrical forms of causation (i.e., learning effects, tipping points) (Lieberson, 1985; Pierson, 2003). These efforts are capable of producing causally more complex explanations by relaxing the assumptions of conditional independence and unity homogeneity. Macrocausal analysis partakes in those efforts to construct more complex explanations, but it also takes the additional step of paying additional attention to elements of physical time.

Longue Durée Analysis

Longue durée analysis was pioneered by the 1930s French Annals historians, who leveraged time-series data to explore how slow-moving, long-term demographic, economic, and environmental trends shape faster-moving, event-driven political history. It also is used by demographers, geographers and economic historians. It arguably is the least established strand within CHA, because time-series data is oftentimes not readily available or is very time consuming to compile. Economic historians have used longue durée analysis most frequently in CHA. In recent years, scholars have collaborated and invested enormous resources to expand data sets on regimes (i.e., V-Dem) or conflict

(e.g., PRIO). These efforts explain why *longue durée* analysis is assuming an increasingly prominent role within CHA.

Longue durée analysis employs a thicker understanding of history than macro-causal analysis because it links its observation to specific dates. It thus is capable of tracking changes through time and helping analyze of how the past is different from the present. Time-series data is available for a variety of topics that in many instances have some performance element that they track over time. These indicators involve among others GPD, productivity, interest rates on public borrowing, energy consumption, demographic data, trade flows, election returns, parliamentary votes, levels of democracy, or battle deaths. These performance indicators reflect the origins of modern statistics and the governments' desire to develop metrics to better assess their performance. Douglas North and colleagues point out, "the task of the social sciences is to explain performance characteristics through time" (2009, 1). *Longue durée* analysis ultimately has a more technocratic view of history where the past is connected to the present through a number of continuous economic, political, demographic tasks that are measurable and thus permit analyzing change through time by tracking trend patterns. Its focus on such trends permits *longue durée* analysis to also incorporate elements of physical time. It talks about tempo when it looks at rates of change; it refers to timing when it identifies inflection points or structural breaks in trends; and it focuses on duration when it measures how long a particular trend lasts.

Longue durée analysis makes two distinct contributions to CHA by in two ways. First, it permits a *temporal broadening* by placing shorter-term analysis in a longer-term context (The term is borrowed from Singh Grewal, 2014, 630). It permits seeing causes and effects not as snapshots but as a process whose changes can be tracked over time and thus gain valuable insights into changing form, that is the morphology, of a phenomenon. Second, it facilitates comparing those cross-sectional processes and thus can identify interesting patterns (Ermakoff, 2019, 593–595). As we will see, eventful analysis also has the potential to identify patterns, but their temporal and geographic range is restricted because it has to rely on strictly qualitative evidence that is far less commensurate and parsimonious than panel data.

Longue durée analysis is particularly evident in the work by Douglass North, Kenneth Pomeranz, Ian Morris, and others who seek to explain the West's alleged economic and military superiority. Using panel data, these authors argue over the timing and rate of economic growth, technological innovations, or age of representative institutions in order to identify when and how the West economically diverged from the rest of the world. Jack Goldstone, in turn, explains revolutions and rebellions in terms of long-term demographic changes (1993). *Longue durée* analysis also can be helpful for historical baselining and seeing whether a particular short-term trend is a historical anomaly or part of a recurring longer-term secular trend or cyclical pattern. Thomas Piketty showed that Simon Kuznets's claim that inequality declines as national incomes grow was a historical anomaly by placing his analysis from the first half of the twentieth century in a longer, two-hundred-year time frame (2017). This longer timescale showed that, despite continued growth, inequality increased from the 1990s onward and thus

undermined Kuznets's original claim (Singh Grewal, 2014, 625–635). Or, as Sebastian Conrad points out, placing the economic growth of post-Mao China in a longer-term, millennial time frame, shifts the attention from Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in the 1990s to China's economic prowess back in the eighteenth century. "Seen from this vantage point, China's current rise looks less like a new beginning than a homecoming: a structurally determined return to normality" (2017, 148).

Longue durée faces limitations in capturing the sort of historical changes on which eventful analysis concentrates. These limitations come up in the criticism that time series is ahistorical and thus permits at best a thin version of CHA. Time-series data is, strictly speaking, ahistorical, because it captures only fluctuations across time even when time corresponds specific years, decades, or centuries and thus acquires a quasi-historical quality (Abbott, 1988; Isaac and Griffin, 1989). This ahistorical quality is most directly evident in the need to modify the Dow Jones or the GDP indicator to assure that they capture how structural changes in the economy (i.e., its historical transformation) also change what constitutes national income (Karabell, 2014; Singh Grewal, 2014, 644–652). Times series of a parties' electoral fortunes or corporate earning rates describe their varying performance across different points in history, but those indicators do not reveal any qualitative insights into the parties' ideological or organizational transformation (Katz and Mair, 1995) or the companies' changing ownership structure or production methods (Chandler, 1977). This ahistorical quality also becomes apparent in the characterization of time series trends. They typically are characterized as seasonal, if fluctuations repeat themselves during fixed calendric moments, or cyclical if they repeat themselves independently of calendric moments. Such trends are reversible and thus fundamentally different from the irreversible trends that historians analyze.

Eventful Analysis

"Eventful analysis" is an umbrella term for more historically oriented CHA works that are close to traditional forms of political, economic, intellectual, and global history. It is represented by works of APD scholars (Orren and Skowronek, 2004), global historical sociologists (Go and Lawson, 2017), constructivists in international relations (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001), historical institutionalists (Fioretos et al., 2016), historians of the welfare state (Baldwin, 1990; Pierson, 1994; Hacker, 2002), postcolonialists (Chakrabarty, 2008; Steinmetz, 2008), and scholars of race and gender (Adams et al., 2005). These works employ the thickest notion of history where the past is treated as something that is different from the present (Schiffman, 2011, 2). The past comprises series of events with specific dates that are chronologically ordered and are compared across time to identify continuities and discontinuities. Eventful analysis thus tackles first and foremost the ontological challenge of studying units of analysis that are interdependent and whose resulting interactions over time contribute to their qualitative transformation. And these qualitative transformations make them

too heterogeneous (i.e., lacking in uniformity) so that they could provide a valid basis for drawing inferences for the larger population. Eventful analysis thus requires *contextualized comparisons* (e.g., apples and oranges) that extrapolate those qualitative transformations rather than *paired comparisons* (e.g., apples and apples) that permit measuring variations in degree (Locke and Thelen, 1995; Schaffer, 2018).

Eventful analysis engages in contextualized comparisons in order to assure that a phenomenon is sufficiently understood before it is explained (Abbott, 1991; Sewell, 1996; Zerubavel, 2003). It achieves this understanding by engaging in thick description of the historical changes in concepts, institutions, economic structures, collective identities, or the international order. Such descriptions involve isolating the relevant events that bring about changes, lumping those events into larger periodization schemes, and identifying even larger directions along which history unfolds. The events themselves are described in quite some detail to give the reader a clear sense who the central actors were, what motivated them, what constrained their actions, and how their actions either reproduced the status quo when facing pressures to change, or how they changed the status quo when confronting forces trying to preserve it (Ermakoff, 2019; Kreuzer, 2019). What helps those descriptions increase our understanding is their effort to identify continuities and discontinuities that link the past to the present.

The APD literature provides a particularly good illustration of eventful analysis. It forgoes hypothesis testing that is used to explain cross-sectional variations. It focuses instead on describing and explaining the changes over time in American politics. It studies the building of a strong, administrative state infrastructure in the late and early twentieth century, the advent of modern social policies (Skocpol, 1995; Hacker, 2002), or changing patterns of racial discrimination (Valelly, 2004; Katznelson, 2014). Some APD scholars also take the additional step of reflecting on whether or not the American Revolution set the United States on an exceptionalist trajectory or not (Smith, 1993; Orren and Skowronek, 2004). International relations constructivists and global historical sociologists have tried to move beyond, what they call, the methodological nationalism and retrace the historical origins national sovereignty, global markets, international norms (Dixon, 2018), multilateral organizations, and other supra- and transnational phenomena (Go and Lawson, 2017). A subset of these international relations scholars also tries to understand the direction of such changes by asking to what extent such transformations are cyclical or linear or whether they make the world less Euro-centric and more peaceful (Hobden and Hobson, 2001; Conrad, 2017). Finally, comparative political scientists explore how concepts like democracy or popular sovereignty evolved from being a vague, eighteenth-century moniker for antimonarchists to becoming specific modern-day terms associated with rule of law, checks and balances, universal suffrage, and party rule (Morgan, 1988; Markoff, 1999; Møller, 2018). Historical institutionalists, in turn, have developed a nuanced analytical framework for studying the transformation of party systems (Kreuzer, 2001; Krauss and Pekkanen, 2010), labor markets, financial markets, business organizations, or legal norms (Fioretos et al., 2016).

EX ANTE VERSUS EX POST TREATMENTS OF TIME

This explication of CHA's temporal foundations hopefully highlighted the distinct role that time plays in the social sciences and the corrective it provides to the stunted temporal vocabulary used in parts of social science and the short/short explanations, to which Pierson alludes, it prefers. The three strands each enormously enrich and refine the temporal vocabulary of the social sciences and thereby also highlight the very different temporal vocabulary used by frequentists. Frequentist talk about endogeneity to identify causes uncaused by prior ones and thereby in effect are looking for historical discontinuities. They invoke historical boundary conditions and thus put forth periodization schemes for delimiting the external validity of their findings. They worry about asymmetrical causation in phenomena in which earlier causes produce irreversible effects for later causes because later historical actors learn from earlier ones and thus make it less likely that history repeats itself (Lieberson, 1985). Concerns about linearity involve discussions concerning the tempo of change as well as the sequences and timing at which the past unfolds (Abbott, 1988). This frequentist vocabulary clearly talks about temporal matters, but it has far more technical and diagnostic quality than the vocabulary used by CHA. It also is a vocabulary that is deployed relatively late, in the post-testing stage of a research cycle, where, together with other confounders, it is used to discuss the robustness of test findings. Frequentists thus talk about time *ex post*—after having conducted their tests—and employ a terminology drawn from statistics. This *ex post* temporal discussion is related to the backgrounding of time prior to the actual testing. This background is done by stipulating conditional independence and unit homogeneity, that is, assuming a clock-like world in which earlier pieces of evidence don't interact with latter ones, and where the attributes of each piece of evidence is shared with other pieces in the larger population. The frequentists' temporal vocabulary thus is helpful for diagnosing biases in the causal inferences, but it is too thin to be helpful in understanding how time produces those biases in the first place. It simply is too abstract, too technical, too far removed from the actual phenomena to help update the theories and thereby eliminate factors biasing the results. By contrast, CHA employs a thicker temporal vocabulary and treats time *ex ante* by foregrounding and assuming a world in which events are interdependent and heterogeneous. Its embrace of time at the theory-generating stage allows it to pay closer attention to the complexities of time, incorporate them in their explanations before they set out to test them, and ultimately produce results that are less likely biased by endogeneity, asymmetrical causation, or overlooked boundary conditions. Its *ex ante* attention to time directly reduces *ex post* biases and makes it easier to unpack and understand the confounding effects of time. Ultimately, CHA has an enormous contribution to make to other methodologies because its close attention to time makes it more likely that social inquiry “produces not just results, but also answers” (adapted from Aschwanden, 2015).

NOTES

1. This chapter is part of a larger book project that explicates the methodological underpinnings of CHA by paying closer attention to its uses of time. In this project, I have benefited from the generosity, patience, and insights of numerous people who have helped me, on occasions too numerous to count, to scale back my claims, moderate my tone, disentangle my muddled assertions, and refine my argument with insightful suggestions. My thanks, therefore, go to Richard Bense, Jennifer Dixon, Colin Elman, John Gerring, Diana Kapiszewski, James Mahoney, Jørgen Møller, and Gerry Munck. If this current draft does not yet address all their criticisms, hopefully the forthcoming book will get a step closer.
2. Timing and sequencing are used in multiple ways and thus do not have a single consistent definition. In CHA, sequencing refers to the temporal order of events across multiple cases. *Sequencing involves comparing* the order of events and exploring whether such events have the same order or whether the order is reversed in another case. It thus makes a basic *before* and *after* differentiation that is different from the more common use of sequence as any order of events. Timing also involves comparing because it refers to whether an event in one case occurred early or late relative to a similar event in other cases. It thus has a more specific meaning than the more generic use of timing, which refers to when a singular event occurred. The section "Physical Time" elaborates further on these two notions of time.
3. I keep their macrocausal analysis label but rename parallel demonstration of theory as *longue durée* analysis, and the contrast-oriented analysis as *eventful analysis*. This relabeling serves to better capture the temporal assumptions of the three approaches. It also is meant to reflect the evolution of CHA since Skocpol and Somers's original typology and its growing attention to time.

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PART II

TIME AND
COMPARATIVE
PUBLIC POLICY

CHAPTER 11

TEMPORALITY AND THE ANALYSIS OF POLICY PROCESSES

MICHAEL HOWLETT

Most policy studies focus on changes that occur in government actions over time, but the need to carefully examine the often implicit theories of time and temporality behind patterns of policy development has only been recently recognized (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003; Saldana, 2003; Pierson, 2004; Howlett and Rayner, 2006; Howlett and Goetz, 2014). For many years, policy studies, and especially formal policy analysis, have proceeded along the unspecified and implicit assumption that policymaking followed the precepts of what Andrew Abbott termed “general linear reality” (Abbott, 1988). That is, assuming policy causes and effects could be ascertained empirically and that a general set of social forces could be said to drive policymaking, with deviations from more or less deterministic outcomes existing as “noise” or random error (Aminzade, 1992; Griffin, 1992; Stinchcombe, 1968).

In this way of thinking about policymaking there is an implicit notion that history, *per se*, does not matter. That is, time is thought of as a discrete, infinitely divisible entity and “history” is simply the assemblage of “moments” on a temporal continuum. Which time period is chosen for analysis is immaterial, as each outcome is more or less precisely determined at that moment by the existing configuration of macrovariables. As Abbott put it, in this model, outcomes consist of “the succession of the values of a dependent property or properties over time” (1990).

In most social sciences, including policy science, however, this general conception has been challenged by those who have argued that “sequence matters.” That is, that the determination of policy outcomes is not deterministic, in a stochastic sense, but much more contingent than previously assumed; with the sources of contingency being not just contextual, “environmental” factors but also those related to the historical timing or “ordering” of policy-relevant events (Pierson, 2000b; Abbott, 1990).

This emphasis on structured sequencing was a significant aspect of the neoinstitutional approaches to the study of public policymaking prevalent in the 1990s and later (Steinmo et al., 1992; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Kato, 1996). However, the alternative model of historical sequencing in neoinstitutionalist studies—"path dependency"—is only one of several possible alternatives to the stochastic model (Thelen, 2003; Lieberman, 2001) and, moreover it is arguable that it also does not fit the reality of most policymaking situations (Kay, 2005; Greener, 2005). Other models such as historical narratives and process sequencing exist and may be more appropriate as models of both in the temporal aspects of public policymaking.

THREE POLICY-RELEVANT CONCEPTIONS OF HISTORICAL SEQUENCING ALTERNATE TO THE STOCHASTIC MODEL

Sociologists and others at the onset of the 1990s examined these same questions of historical modeling (Somers, 1996; Abbott, 2001). These insights are only now slowly penetrating into concepts and methods used in the policy sciences but provide an excellent corpus of conceptual and methodological work on the subject (Howlett and Rayner, 2006). These studies have outlined the basic nature of several approaches to understanding temporality that are relevant to policy studies, with some being more relevant than others. In what follows these are set out and their merits and demerits as models of the general historical reality of public policymaking set out.

Inevitable Sequence Models: Historical Narratives

While path dependency emerged in many neoinstitutional accounts of policymaking as a serious competitor to the "general linear model," in general the principal alternative to the stochastic model of historical reality in the social sciences is a narrative one. This involves the reading of history, including policy history, as a causal narrative. This is a model and methodology prevalent in academic history departments and many other areas of social, cultural and political studies (Abbott, 1992; Stinchcombe, 1968, 101–129). Although less predominant in the social sciences than the stochastic model, as a result of earlier struggles between critical theorists and advocates of more scientific "behavioral" methods of social inquiry (Adorno et al., 1976; Almond and Genco, 1977) narrative models remain very popular in fields such as history and literary studies as well as in the policy sciences (Yanow, 1996, 1999).

In this model, an entire sequence of events is read, retroactively, as a single entity. The challenge for the analyst is to uncover the "plot" or "narrative" that can "explain" the development of a process such as policymaking in some specific issue area from start to

finish, or “birth” to “death” (Abbott, 1990). In this view, “causality” is much more complicated than usually assumed in the stochastic model, in that the sequencing of events is highly significant in terms of gauging the effects of causative agents or variables. At one point in a narrative story, for example, the presence or absence of a certain variable may have one effect, while later on it may have none, or a different one altogether. Work by Czarniawska, Abbott, and others at the turn of the millennium developed the outlines of a formal model of such narratives, specifying the key assumptions of different narrative models and suggesting their utility and disutility for social analysis (Abbott, 1992; Czarniawska, 1998; Ospina and Dodge, 2005).

Abbott, for example, specified three major “story properties” that are methodologically significant in narrative analysis. These are (1) *enchainment*—or the “narrative analogue of causality,” in which it is assumed that there are links between one point in the narrative and another; (2) *order*—in which the narrative must proceed in a strict sequence if the observed outcome is to be explained; and (3) *convergence*—in which a narrative sequence might achieve a “steady state,” a special case allowing stochastic analysis to be an appropriate and effective tool for analyzing developments occurring within a narrative chain (Abbott, 1992).

Abbott has also set out some of the major problems that face this kind of analysis. These include problems establishing “endpoints” in the analysis (for example, when the “birth” and “death” of a phenomenon are not easily identified); problems of multiple overlapping and intersecting “plots” that can make a central narrative storyline difficult to discern; and problems with too many characters obscuring the plotlines of a story (Abbott, 1992).

This question of how to validate narrative interpretations has long been an issue in the hermeneutic tradition (Gadamer, 1989; Ihde, 1974). All of these problems center on the significance of the role played by the narrative analyst as interpreter of events, who may by force of circumstances choose to simplify a story in order to reveal more clearly its fundamental plot, but who does so at the risk of imposing an idiosyncratic or personal interpretation of events on history (Buthe, 2002). The idea that actors make sense of social phenomena by telling stories about them, stories that they use to orient themselves and to guide (or misguide) other actors, is both intuitively plausible and directs theoretical attention to hermeneutic mechanisms of enplotment and narratology (Czarniawska, 2004b).

Czarniawska suggested two ways in which narrative analyses approach this issue. The first is to treat actors’ narratives as partial and sometimes deliberately misleading accounts of “what is really going on” in the social world. The business of the theorist is to unmask the partial and motivated character of actual narratives, sometimes by telling an alternative story but more often in policy studies by appealing to other methodologies to demonstrate the gap between the stories and an underlying reality (see also Buthe, 2002). The second, more extreme, option is to suggest there is no underlying reality against which the truth or falsity of particular stories can be checked and that all accounts, including the observer’s, are relative.

The first option is close to what Buthe, Czarniawska, and Abbott have termed “narrative positivism.” Here the analyst is trying to “get the story right” by correctly identifying

the causal mechanisms that are actually operating in a world that exists independently of narratives. The second or “narrative postmodernism” position also has a long history in social studies and is built on the observation that there is a world outside of the narrative but that at the moment we try to describe it we are again telling stories (Foucault, 1972). This approach has been used in some accounts of science and technology, where scientists are analyzed as (mere) storytellers (Traweek, 1992; Law, 2000), and also in other accounts that argue “truth” is politically determined (Edelman, 1964, 1988).

Unlike the case with the stochastic model, in narrative positivism one would expect to find lockstep and irreversible patterns of historical development, ones with specific causal patterns related to historical sequencing. In narrative postmodernism, the role of sequencing is much less clear. It matters when framing and reframing take place because of the limited stock of “ideas in good currency” that are available at any particular time (Fischer, 2003). Postmodern emphases on reframing and free play, on the other hand, tend to undermine any sense that history moves in any kind of specific direction, meaning, ironically, that this approach in the end has much in common with the stochastic model (Czarniawska, 2004a).

The narrative positivist approach has lain largely unnoticed and unacknowledged at the heart of many efforts to analyze policy change and development. Many works that have examined policy development over time, from undergraduate student essays to the autobiographical memoirs of key policy actors, simply adopt a narrative positivist approach, working backward from ultimate outcomes to trace causative agents and pivotal moments in the historical record of what are viewed as inevitable sequences of policymaking events (Raadschelders, 1998).

Both the positivist and postmodern variants of the narrative approach have many weaknesses that are evident when they are applied to the study of policymaking. This type of policy analysis has often been castigated by adherents of the stochastic model as providing little more than idiosyncratic, noncumulative “thick description” (Calhoun, 1998). And it is certainly the case that as applied to the policy sciences this model has many methodological difficulties related to its *ex post facto* character, difficulties involved in the replication of the analysis, and problems with generalizing results across policy “stories” (Griffin, 1993; Thompson, 2001; George and Bennett, 2005).

The problem with the application of this postmodern narrative model to policy issues is that the policy narratives generated through application of either positivist or postmodern methods always tend to be idiosyncratic, retroactive explications of events that have already occurred, where inevitability is observable only in hindsight. This approach, especially, encounters great difficulty in developing periodization strategies that are not idiosyncratic or “predetermined” by the narrative structure attributed to the story by the narrator (Lieberman, 2001; Lustick, 1996; Clemens, 1999). Also, and more significantly, this method only “works” when there is a match between the method and the underlying empirical reality of the policy context being examined. That is, while for narrative postmodernism the policymaking world that is being narrated must be relatively chaotic so that fluctuation in frames may be apparent, in its positivistic variant the reverse is true. That is, policymaking must be highly stable, so that the inevitability

portrayed in the narrative mirrors the sense of inevitability found in the narratives of the policy actors themselves (Bernstein et al., 2000).

The Contingent Sequence Model: Path Dependency

These two versions of narrative analyses, of course, are not the only models of historical sequencing available to help analyze historical processes such as policymaking. For a variety of reasons related to high-profile disputes between institutional and other types of economists, one of the best-known recent alternatives to both the older stochastic and narrative modes of analysis in the social sciences is the “path dependency” model, which emerged around the same time in the policy field (Greener, 2002a, 2005).

The contours of the development of the path dependency model in the social sciences is well known, especially the influence of debates in the economics literature on whether or not it is possible for market transactions to result in suboptimal outcomes as inferior technologies come to be “locked-in” to specific economic “trajectories” (Arthur, 1988, 1989; David, 1985, 1986; Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995, 1990).

Path dependency in this sense explains the failure to achieve a technically efficient solution that is attributed by historically oriented economists to any one of a number of factors. These include “network effects,” or the ability of inferior technologies to spread and block the adoption of more efficient ones; “increasing returns,” or the historical accident of the timing of the entry of new technologies into the marketplace; and (premature) “standardization,” which can also block the spread of superior technologies. Debates in economics tend to turn on issues of what Liebowitz has called the “degree” of path dependency, that is, how hard it is to “turnaround” a suboptimal process once it is underway (Liebowitz and Margolis, 1995). For some authors turnaround is almost impossible, for others, it is somewhat less difficult to accomplish.

In the social and political realm, the concept of path dependency is less specific than that found in economics and has been applied as a description of historical policymaking processes that observers have found to be highly contingent and inertial in nature. As mentioned earlier, it is commonly associated with neoinstitutional forms of social and political analysis and their application to policymaking.

Mahoney outlines the three principal elements of the general path dependent model of historical evolution. This very much follows narrative precepts that sequences of events exist and are important in determining policy outputs and outcomes but with several key differences: (1) only early events in sequence matter or at least matter more than ones that occur later in a temporal sequence; (2) these early events are said to be contingent in the sense that they could have occurred otherwise or not at all; and (3) later events are inertial in the sense that they follow the lead of earlier events and choices (Mahoney, 2000). These elements highlight the crucial aspects of path dependent models of historical development that separate this model from narrative analyses and from other models—like the process sequencing model described later—in that only initial conditions are chance-like, but once they have occurred they have significant

influence over the course of events followed later in the sequence which are neither reversible nor purely contingent.

Identifying the “turning points” or “conjunctures” when trajectories begin and when they become locked in is thus critical to path dependency analyses of historical processes, including policy ones. Although there is significant debate in the literature over exactly what is meant by characterizing an event as “contingent” (Wilsford, 1985; Abbott, 1997), at its simplest, contingency implies that while a sequence of events is not a strictly necessary one, as narrative positivists would have it, there is nonetheless an explicable pattern that relates one point to another, which is missing in the early part of a sequence. While a random sequence would imply that any event has an equal probability of following from any other, in a contingent sequence after an initial random set of events the occurrence of each next point becomes constrained until, finally, “lock in” occurs and subsequent events must adhere to the logic or path established at the outset. Thus in a policy context, for example, various kinds of crises and accidents can lead to the gradual development of a more or less coherent set of responses to a problem (a “policy”) which, once in place, is difficult to change except around the edges (List, 2004).

In evaluating how path dependency models have been applied in the policy sciences, however, it must be noted that many policy studies claiming to apply path dependent models are relatively unsystematic and may only be using the term to assert that “history matters” in the development and implementation of policies (Cox, 2004; Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin, 2005).

There are examples of the more systematic application of the general model of path dependency to policymaking, though. Probably the most well known are the analyses of welfare state development in the United States conducted by Pierson and Hacker, among others (Pierson, 2000a; Hacker, 2002). Pierson’s version of path dependency uses the concept of increasing returns to explain why a particular path is taken and ultimately “locked in.” Hacker also defines the explanatory mechanism of path dependency as increasing returns, although he argues that whether increasing returns actually occur or not cannot be predicted in advance. While both authors suggest that two versions—broad (noninevitable lock-in) path dependency and narrow (inevitable lock-in) path dependency—are possible, they ultimately opt for the narrow version in their studies and argue that without the concept of suboptimal lock-in, path dependent analysis simply reverts to the weak causation characteristic of historical narratology.

Pierson sets out an explicit model of path dependency processes in political life that is worth discussing in some detail, since it is a model often cited if seldom subjected to detailed analysis (Deeg, 2001; Kay, 2005). His key hypothesis is that, since political life is one involving (1) collective action; (2) institutions; (3) political authority; and (4) complexity, it will generate increasing returns to key players, leading to lock-in and narrow path dependency. Hacker makes a similar argument, stating that the possibilities of path dependence processes are great in politics and policymaking, since:

[f]irst, policy creates or encourages the creation of large scale organizations with substantial set-up costs; second, a policy directly or indirectly benefits sizable organized groups or constituencies; third, a policy embodies long-lived commitments upon

which beneficiaries and those around them premise crucial life and organizational decisions; fourth, the institutions and expectations a policy creates are of necessity densely interwoven with the broader features of the economy and society, creating interlocking networks of complementary institutions; and fifth, features of the environment within which a policy is formulated and implemented make it harder to recognize or respond to policy outcomes that are unanticipated or undesired.

(Hacker, 2002, 55)

There are several problems with this formulation, however, which raise questions about its ability to serve as a superior model of historical explanation in the policy realm.

First, there is the discussion of the collective nature of politics. Here, Pierson uses the analysis of public goods and pluralist arguments to make his case that larger groups are more powerful than smaller ones (Olson, 1965; Skocpol, Marshall, and Ziad, 2000), but ignores the actual reasons for group formation and membership growth (Nownes and Neeley, 1996; Nownes, 1995, 2000; Nownes and Cigler, 1995) and the impact of discourses rather than size of groups on policy influence (Burt, 1990). Taking the empirical evidence on these factors into account, it is apparent that size of groups, alone, is not a factor leading to path dependence. Second, Pierson follows Bachrach and Baratz (1970) in arguing that actors may use power to reinforce their other advantages—that power asymmetries are an important source of increasing returns. However, as Deeg (2005) has noted, this does not necessarily lead to lock-in if powerful actors wish change to occur. Third, Pierson argues that learning leads to paradigmatic lock-in. However, as Buthe (2002) and others have noted, learning can also involve exogenous lesson-drawing, that is, bringing new ideas into existing subsystems, and undermining existing paradigms (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin, 2005; Kay, 2005).

Finally, Pierson's argument that institutional densities are a key factor leading to increasing returns, since "the cost of exit from institutions is very high," is simply asserted with no proof offered. Although, some studies have found evidence that structures constrain change (Rayner et al., 2001), other studies have found that institutions can also promote and facilitate change, so that the one-way dynamics suggested by Pierson are not present (Gains et al., 2005).

Similarly, the emphasis on contingency in creating a trajectory is assumed but not systematically developed in most works purporting to apply path dependency models to policy events (Greener, 2002b; Thelen, 2003). Studies of policy windows, for example, have found that these only rarely open and close at random (Kingdon, 1995; Howlett, 1998; Keeler, 1993), implying that the path dependency model, while alluring in its possible blend of narrative and stochastic elements may be, in fact, very much like those other two models, only relevant in very limited and specific policy circumstances.

Punctuated Equilibrium Models—Process Sequencing

Conceptions of history and the analytical methodologies that are associated with them, however, do not line up neatly on a simple spectrum from context-bound to random.

This is made clear by the elements and assumptions of a fourth model of history found in the present-day social sciences that provides an alternative conception of the nature of social processes to both narratives and path dependency. In this model, unlike in the stochastic or narrative postmodernist models, sequence does matter. However, unlike the narrative positivist model, it is not concerned with irreversible sequences and, unlike the path dependency model, it does not rely on random or purely contingent initial conditions to set trajectories in motion. This is the “process sequencing” model, which conceives of social processes as “the connections between events in different time periods as reiterated problem solving” (Haydu, 1998). Proponents of this model among sociologists, such as Jeffrey Haydu, argue that it has advantages over both the narrative and path dependency models as it “provides a plausible way to represent and account for historical trajectories; it builds social actors and multiple causal timelines into explanatory accounts; and it offers a richer sense of how earlier outcomes shape later ones” (341). Rather than connect historical events through stories or paths, Haydu argues, events can be demarcated on the basis of “contrasting solutions for recurring problems” (354). That is, “continuities across temporal cases can be traced in part to enduring problems, while more or less contingent solutions to those problems are seen as reflecting and regenerating the historical individuality of each period” (354).

Based in part on work in evolutionary biology that suggested evolutionary processes proceeded in a stepped or “punctuated equilibrium” fashion (Gersick, 1991; Eldredge and Gould, 1972; Gould and Eldredge, 1977), this model looks at first blush somewhat like path dependency in its emphasis on turning points and trajectories, and its combination of elements of the stochastic and narrative models. Significantly, however, the model lacks path dependency’s emphasis on randomness in the starting points of trajectories and is not wedded to the idea of irreversible trajectories found in narrative positivism. That is, process sequencing stresses not how outcomes at historical switch points are accidents, but how they are firmly based or rooted in previous events and thinking as related structural processes of negative and positive feedback affect actor behavior (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002a). Changes in trajectories in this model are not random or chaotic, but are outgrowths of earlier trajectories.

Hence, although process sequencing shares some of the characteristics of the path dependency model, it is not the same. The idea of change occurring as a result of an embedded “crisis,” for example, in the process sequencing model, is not the same as that focusing on random critical juncture found in a typical path dependency explanation. Moreover, this model does not require a unidirectional trajectory following an initial conjuncture, but allows for the kinds of reversals in trajectories identified in the narrative postmodern model as the development of ideas and discourses proceeds apace.

This model has become increasingly popular in fields such as political science as an alternative to path dependent models, providing a better explanation of phenomena such as the creation and development of national and sectoral political institutions as well as political ideas, discourses, and paradigms (Lieberman, 2002; Lindner, 2003; Lindner and Rittberger, 2003; Pierson, 2000c), and appears to be more consistent with the actual empirical record of changes found in many countries and sectors than the path

dependency model (Dobrowolsky and Saint-Martin, 2005; Morgan and Kubo, 2005; Rico and Costa-Font, 2005).

This model also has the best-developed empirical evidence supporting a particular model of historical sequencing in the policy sciences (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002b; True et al., 1999). Much of this evidence has been put forward by Baumgartner and Jones in their many works on US and comparative public policymaking (Jones et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2003; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; True, 2000) although other authors have also found evidence of such processes at work as well (John and Margetts, 2003).

In such models, “normal” or marginal, incremental, change and atypical policy dynamics or “paradigmatic” change are linked together to form a particular overall “stepped” or punctuated equilibrium pattern of policy evolution through broken trajectories. That is, change occurs as an irregular, stepped, function in which relatively long periods of policy stability are interspersed with infrequent periods of substantial change. Baumgartner and Jones’s discovery of leptokurtic distributions in US federal government annual budgetary allocations provides strong empirical evidence of the expected pattern of policy punctuations occurring in this area (Jones et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2003).

In the policy realm, punctuated equilibrium describes a situation whereby normal policymaking involves fairly common, routine, noninnovative changes at the margin of existing policies using existing policy processes, institutions, and regimes. Atypical, paradigmatic, or nonincremental change then involves new policies that represent a sharp break from how policies were developed, conceived, and implemented in the past but are still rooted in the same general concerns and problems (Berry, 1990; Cox, 1992). Frequently cited examples of such changes include shifts in fiscal and monetary policy in most Western countries from a balanced-budget orthodoxy to Keynesian demand-management principles and practices in the 1930s and 1940s and a subsequent shift away from Keynesianism to forms of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s (Hall, 1989, 1992).

In these kind of process sequencing models, change is seen as occurring in a series of steps as policy paradigms are constructed and destroyed (Hall, 1990, 1993), a process linked by authors such as Sabatier and Baumgartner and Jones to the construction and destruction of belief systems in policy subsystems (Sabatier, 1988; Baumgartner and Jones, 1991, 1993). As theorists have come to a better understanding of how belief systems persist and change, the original analogies that the punctuated equilibrium model made between the extended periods of incremental policy adjustment and the Kuhnian idea of “normal science” and, hence, also between punctuations and scientific revolutions, have been replaced with more grounded accounts of the relations between value shifts, policy learning, and change (McNamara, 1998; Coleman et al., 1996; Hogan and Howlett, 2015).

Because of this work, earlier general criticisms of the punctuated equilibrium model to the effect that, while it assumed long periods of policy stasis, it provided no way of accounting for critical punctuations, which were explained only through narrative positivist or postmodernist methods—that is, in retrospect—are no longer valid (Schlager, 1999). This is not to say that only this model is appropriate in the policy sciences,

however since instances of extreme persistence, on the one hand, and contingent change, on the other, even though rare at the systemic level, do exist and are amenable to treatment using narrative, stochastic and, sometimes, path dependency methods (Howlett, 2009; Daugbjerg, 2012). Moreover, a significant challenge to punctuated equilibrium explanations noted by some of its original exponents is the relation to different levels or orders of change (True, 2000). That is, changes can occur both at the systemic and subsystemic level and between policy elements versus overall policy areas or fields, leading to some consequent difficulties in discriminating the scale and significance of a change at different levels of policymaking (Cashore and Howlett, 2006).

As True (2000) and Cashore and Howlett (2006) have noted, punctuated equilibrium theory suggests that some policy punctuation is always happening in some subsystem or other, or within some element of a policy regime, but that at the systemic or regime level the overall picture may remain one of stability, posing a continual challenge to punctuated equilibrium notions of policy dynamics. That is, extreme persistence and contingent change are more likely to be found at the subsystemic and subregime levels rather than the systemic or regime ones, and detailed explanations of change at the subsystem or subregime level are correspondingly more likely to need other kinds of historical explanation than process sequencing. Explanations of stability and change in particular issue areas within policy subsystems and among the component parts of a policy regime thus require a careful matching of modes of historical explanation to empirical circumstances on the part of the analyst.

CONCLUSION: THE MERITS AND DEMERITS OF ALTERNATE MODELS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE TEMPORALITY OF PUBLIC POLICY PROCESSES

As this discussion has shown, as the extent of contextual embeddedness of social actors increases to the point where we are concerned with apparently irreversible sequences that could not have been other than they were, we find ourselves in the world of the narrative. At the other extreme, where contextual embeddedness is deemed irrelevant and only chance-like conditions prevail, the stochastic model prevails (along with its post-modern narrative equivalent). In between these two extremes lies the path dependency model, combining narrative's attention to sequence in understanding later trajectories of events, but focusing on contingency and randomness in understanding the causal dynamics of the "critical junctures" that start those trajectories in motion.

It is important to reiterate the several key features identified previously that differentiate these several general models of historical sequencing from each other. That is, the key aspect of the stochastic model is its ahistoricism, the notion that sequences

		Direction of Sequence	
		Reversible	Irreversible
Origins of Sequence	Contingent/ Random	<i>Stochastic and Narrative Postmodernist Models</i>	<i>Path Dependency</i>
	Embedded/ Cumulative	<i>Process Sequencing</i>	<i>Narrative Positivism</i>

FIGURE 11.1: Conceptions of historical change compared.

do not matter, a point shared with postmodern narratology in the sense that the origin and order of stories is unimportant. The narrative positivist model, on the other hand, emphasizes adaptation within a sequence and the irreversibility of events and trajectories that could not be otherwise than they have been described. In the path dependency model, the key features are the random aspects of critical junctures and hence the possibility of alternative trajectories at early points in a sequence, along with, as in the narrative positivist model, the irreversibility of sequences once “locked-in.” These contrast with the process sequencing model’s emphasis on reiterated problem-solving as embedding a new trajectory in a previous one, and the ability of trajectories to shift, and even reverse, direction.

Figure 11.1 illustrates the principal differences between these general models in terms of their assumptions about the direction and origins of historical sequences.

At the present time the policy literature has taken a definite historical turn, with the stochastic models favored by many analysts searching for causal determinants in the early years of the policy sciences largely falling by the wayside as contemporary analysts grapple with the dynamics and the phenomena of policy change and stability. However, the existence of these competing conceptions of historical explanation, given the historical development of policies, poses problems for the policy sciences. Since many preliminary methodological and conceptual issues relating to the design of policy studies and the assimilation of their findings are related to the temporal models used, which, if any, is the correct or most appropriate alternative to the stochastic model, is a serious question for those studying public policy.

While the stranglehold on analysis of the stochastic model may have been broken, however, the contours of the best alternative model have not been clarified. Although there has been some thought given to systematizing the older tradition of thick descriptions of policy processes through the development of the postmodern and positivist streams of policy narratology, the most interesting new work has a hybrid character that incorporates narrative and stochastic methods in the course of developing models of path dependency and process sequencing.

Most attention, hitherto, has been paid to the potential for path dependency to synthesize elements of both the narrative and stochastic models into a powerful “mixed” model of historical processes. However, at present, in the policy sciences, “path dependence” remains a much used, and abused, model of historical sequencing. Although it

has been applied to such diverse cases of policymaking and political restructuring as European, Danish, and post-Soviet regime transitions (Holzinger and Knill, 2002; Nee and Cao, 1999; Rona-Tas, 1998; Torfing, 2001) and environmental, industrial, and health policymaking (Kline, 2001; Rahnama and Howlett, 2002; Bevan and Robinson, 2005; Courchene, 1993; Wilsford, 1994), most of the works that employ it in the policy sphere have tended to apply it unsystematically or to somewhat uncritically accept the analogies from the economics literature where it developed. As has been shown in this chapter, even the work of its most prominent exponents in the policy sciences, while distinguishable from the accounts provided in the economics literature, rests on many unsubstantiated theoretical assertions and incorrect empirics.

As the discussion has also shown, however, process sequencing is, in fact, a more promising synthetic approach, incorporating elements of the path dependent, narrative, and stochastic models in a policy-relevant way with an impressive array of empirical studies behind it. In its punctuated equilibrium formulation, process sequencing has received a great deal of empirical support to back its candidacy for being a superior general model of the most common type of policy dynamics. There is an increasing weight of evidence from case studies of process sequencing in policy studies; that is, of trajectories changing while being embedded in previous policy legacies so that their new form is not random or contingent, but thoroughly embedded in the old.

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CHAPTER 12

POLITICAL BUDGET CYCLES

Conditioning Factors and New Evidence

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THE assumption of public officials as benevolent dictators whose only interest is to maximize social welfare has long been abandoned. In fact, many political economists would agree that politicians are self-interested—they care about winning the elections or extracting tangible rents for themselves—and thus, when in office, manipulate economic policies to further these goals. The theoretical argument is rather straightforward: voters tend to like low taxes and high spending in public goods, and prefer candidates who they expect will deliver them greater well-being in the postelectoral period. Re-election motives can thus induce politicians to adopt voter-friendly policies before the elections (which often entail distortionary effects), leading to fluctuations in the government budget that track the electoral calendar in timing. Such fluctuations are commonly termed in the literature as “political budget cycles” (PBCs).

The theory underlying the existence of PBCs was originally formulated in the mid-1970s. The most popular politico-economic approach to macroeconomic policy is the “political business cycle” model of Nordhaus (1975).¹ According to this model, governments take advantage of an exploitable Phillips curve to buy votes from naïve and myopic voters. In particular, they conduct stimulatory policies before each election to improve real macroeconomic outcomes (e.g., income, employment, and growth) and eliminate the resulting inflation with a shift to contractionary policies after the election. Myopic voters reward this behavior because the election takes place when the economy is temporarily doing well. Empirical efforts to find electoral cycles in inflation and real outcomes, however, were largely unsuccessful. As noted by Alesina, Roubini, and Cohen (1997), this is partly because the assumption that the electorate is incapable of learning and prone to systematic mistakes in expectations is not satisfactory from a conceptual point of view.

A second generation of theories, recognizing the empirical shortcomings of Nordhaus's approach and inspired by the rational expectation revolution of the 1970s, illustrate how voters' rationality can limit policymakers' ability to influence the state of the economy. According to these theories, however, even when voters are rational, electoral budgetary cycles can still occur due to the presence of information asymmetries between policymakers and voters. For instance, Rogoff and Sibert (1988) assume that each politician has a competence type (high or low) that is private information (for the politician). Voters want to elect the candidate who maximizes their expected utility and form expectations about his competence by observing fiscal policy instruments. Before the election, the high-type incumbent attempts to signal or feign his competence by engaging in expansionary fiscal policy, which is less "costly" to him than it is for the low-type. This results in the creation of budget deficits at election timing. Following the "competence" argument, Rogoff (1990) proposes a related model that exploits the existence of electoral cycles in the composition (rather than the level) of government spending: the incumbent here tries instead to signal or feign his competence by shifting outlays toward the more "visible" current consumption and away from public investment.

In an alternative model of the second-generation PBC theories, Shi and Svensson (2006) assume that all politicians, regardless of their type or ability, have an incentive to boost the supply of public goods before the election. By doing so, politicians hope that voters would attribute the boost to their competence. The key features of their model are that (1) politicians' incentives to influence voters' perception increase in the amount of rents they obtain when in power, and (2) the return for the incumbent to conduct pre-electoral manipulations increases in the proportion of uninformed voters who fail to distinguish pre-electoral manipulations from politicians' competence. Thus, the size of PBCs depends on the amount of private rents extractable and the share of informed voters, resulting in stronger electoral cycles in developing countries.

In a more recent theoretical formulation, Drazen and Eslava (2010) explain the existence of electoral cycles in countries with sophisticated, well-informed voters, who are averse to high overall government spending; that is, the case of established developed democracies. The main departure from the earlier approaches is that imperfect information about the incumbent is about his preferences over the composition of the budget rather than about his competence. Specifically, according to this model, citizens value government spending on some goods but not others, and rational, forward-looking voters use the composition of public expenditure to make inferences about the incumbent's preferences. Electoral manipulation thus takes the form of shifting spending toward the goods that voters prefer in the attempt to convince them that the incumbent shares their spending priorities.

Turning to the empirical literature, a vast number of papers have investigated the existence of PBCs, using various cross-country data and local-government data within a country. Though more favorable to the predictions of the second generation of theories, the empirical studies have hardly been conclusive. However, a consensus

has recently been reached that the emergence of PBCs is context-conditional. Indeed, as pointed out by Franzese (2002), electoral cycles in economic policies tend to generate the greatest theoretical interest and to receive strongest empirical support when researchers recognize their context conditionality; that is, the dependence of the magnitude, regularity, and content of PBCs on international and domestic politico-economic and institutional conditions. It is thus critical to identify the contextual factors influencing politicians' incentives to embark on pre-electoral policy manipulations and those influencing their capacity to increase their re-election prospects through such manipulations.

Having acknowledged some theoretical underpinnings of PBCs and the relevance of context conditionality in the empirical research on PBCs, this chapter's main objectives are, first, to provide a comprehensive review of the empirical literature, and, second, to revisit the validity of some of the key conditional factors using an extension of the Veiga et al. (2017) dataset, which is based on the IMF's government financial statistics (GFS) fiscal data.² To clarify at the outset, however, since there is a vast amount of works accumulated in the literature, our aim is not to be exhaustive; rather we attempt to give some structure to the past papers in our review. We believe that conducting our own empirical analysis helps organize the review on the relevance of some of the key conditioning factors. Additionally, since an increasing number of recent works on PBCs highlight the relevance of personal characteristics of incumbents such as education, gender, age, social class, and ethnicity, this chapter also provides the review of this emerging strand of literature, which complements the review of works considering factors such as politico-economic conditions and institutions.

REVIEW OF CONDITIONALITY OF PBCs

This section reviews various politico-economic and institutional factors that are regarded as key conditions in the literature for the occurrence of PBCs. To organize our review, we first highlight factors that affect incentives of politicians to embark on pre-electoral policy manipulations, and then turn to factors that influence capability of those manipulations to generate additional votes.

Factors Affecting Incumbents' Incentives and Ability to Act Opportunistically

While factors conditioning PBCs are clearly intertwined, this sub-section focuses on factors that predominantly prompt incumbents to resort to manipulative policies to increase the probability of winning (e.g., electoral competitiveness and the possibility of earning economic rents while in office).

Predictability of the Timing of Elections and Electoral Competitiveness

When the election date is known well in advance, incumbent governments have more time and far greater opportunity to manipulate fiscal policy in order to get re-elected, than when there are snap elections, with a short lag between elections being called and being held.³ The predictability of election timing can thus be seen as a precondition for electoral manipulations. This is consistent with various papers' findings that PBCs are more prevalent in election years when focusing on the subsample of predetermined elections, defined as elections held in the last year of a constitutionally fixed term (e.g., Shi and Svensson, 2006; Vergne, 2009; Efthyvoulou, 2012; Veiga et al., 2017).

Arguably, the incentives of politicians to manipulate fiscal policy for re-election purposes may depend on the expected outcome of the upcoming elections both in terms of the probability of winning the election and the potential changes in government ideology. The hypothesis that electoral competitiveness increases the uncertainty over the electoral outcome, and thus affects politicians' incentives to generate PBCs was first introduced by Frey and Schneider (1978a, 1978b). Strong empirical support for this idea has been found both for central (Efthyvoulou, 2012; Eibl and Lynge-Mangueira, 2017) and local governments (Aidt, Veiga, and Veiga, 2011).

Ideology

A number of studies highlight the interactive relationship between opportunistic and partisan cycles in fiscal policies.⁴ While opportunism and partisanship are often perceived as competing arguments in the literature, the two hypotheses may be, in fact, different sides of the same coin. Specifically, left-wing and right-wing politicians may enact different policies when in office not only because they care about the well-being of certain groups of society but also because by doing so they can preserve their voters' loyalty and secure favorable electoral outcomes (Persson and Tabellini, 2000). In line with this claim, Frey and Schneider (1978a, 1978b, 1979) develop a theory combining office-seeking and partisan motivations to argue that governments respond to their popularity level when making economic policy decisions. Their model assumes that the incumbent politician employs a "sacrificing" strategy that differentiates between two states: in the state of popularity surplus, the politician pursues his ideological goals; in the state of popularity deficit, he engages in expansionary fiscal policies, especially as the elections come nearer. Frey and Schneider (1978a, 1978b, 1979) and Schultz (1995) find strong support for this theory when they look at German, UK, and US policy tools. On similar lines, Efthyvoulou (2011) shows that external economic constraints imposed on the ability of politicians to ingratiate themselves with partisans (such as globalization and the process of European integration) can strengthen their incentives to engineer PBCs; that is, to behave in a nonpartisan manner and pursue (common) election-driven policies that are easy to employ in the short run.

Larger expectations of a change in government ideology may also trigger opportunistic measures as partisan differences increase the utility loss from losing the election to

an opponent with a different ideology (Alesina and Tabellini, 1990). Hence, spending and deficits increase before elections when politicians expect to lose the election, constraining in this way the options of the new elected candidate. Likewise, Persson and Svensson (1989)'s model of strategic debt predicts that a conservative (liberal) government accumulates more (less) debt when it knows it will be succeeded by a liberal (conservative) government, in order to force its successor to spend less (more).

A number of studies also investigate whether government ideology alone (and not the occurrence of partisan fiscal cycles) may affect the size of PBCs. Focusing on American states, Rose (2006) concludes that the partisan composition of American state governments does not significantly affect the magnitude of the PBCs. For Portuguese municipalities, evidence seems to suggest that left-wing mayors generate larger PBCs than right-wing mayors (Veiga and Veiga, 2007).

Constitutional Features

A sizable theoretical and empirical literature deals with constitution-dependent PBCs. Persson and Tabellini have made key contributions to this literature by exploring the role of different electoral rules (majoritarian versus proportional rules in legislative elections) and different forms of government (parliamentary versus presidential regimes) in shaping PBCs.

According to Persson and Tabellini (2000, 2002, 2003), majoritarian systems are associated with stronger individual accountability than proportional systems, where politicians are more collectively accountable. This happens because, under majoritarian systems, the electoral outcome is more sensitive to marginal changes in votes (due to small voting districts and plurality rule) and there is also voting for individual candidates rather than party lists. Thus, elected officials have stronger incentives to please (or at least to appear competent to) their voters in the imminence of elections, resulting in large tax and spending fluctuations around elections. Moreover, the authors stress that, under proportional rules, politicians seek support from larger groups within the electorate, creating stronger incentives to garner votes via broad policy programs, such as welfare spending—as opposed to majoritarian electoral rules, where politicians have stronger incentives to target policies toward particular constituencies. Based on the latter, one should also expect different electoral cycles in the composition of spending (broad versus narrow programs), depending on the electoral rule.

When it comes to the form of government, Persson and Tabellini (2000, 2002, 2003) point out that an important difference between presidential and parliamentary forms of government is the individual versus collective nature of the executive. Presidential regimes are characterized by separate and direct elections for the executive and legislative branches. Hence, while the executive cannot be brought down by the legislature (as in a parliamentary regime), he is directly accountable to the voters. If the strength of PBCs depends on electoral accountability (and checks and balances play a less important role), one should expect stronger electoral cycles under presidential regimes.

Persson and Tabellini (2003) test these predictions using data from 60 countries over the 1960–1998 period. Consistent with the view that majoritarian systems promote accountability while proportional systems promote representation, the authors find that electoral cycles in overall spending and taxes are more pronounced under majoritarian systems, and that election-driven expansions in welfare-state spending are only observable in proportional systems. At the same time, the authors provide evidence of postelectoral effects in overall spending and taxes in presidential countries, and no effects in parliamentary regimes. A possible interpretation of this finding is that, under presidential regimes, the executive has limited ability to pass deliberate fiscal expansions or tax cuts before elections (due to greater separation of powers), but can postpone unpopular fiscal adjustments until after the elections (due to veto powers).

Chang (2008) provides further support for the existence of electoral rule effects on the composition of spending around elections, in line with Persson and Tabellini's arguments. Specifically, focusing on OECD countries, the author shows that before elections, incumbents increase social welfare spending under proportional representation, while they raise district-specific spending (including infrastructure investments such as construction and transport spending) under majoritarian rules. On the other, Brender and Drazen (2005) find that constitution-dependent PBCs exist only in new democracies; that is, in the group of countries where the electoral fiscal cycle exists to begin with.

Rent Extraction, Recandidacy, and Term Limits

Several recent papers propose that the institutional environment is an equally important contextual feature for PBCs, as it can influence politicians' rents of remaining in power. That is, to the extent that institutions leave politicians unconstrained rents that can be extracted in the postelectoral period increase, encouraging politicians to engage in pre-electoral manipulations. For instance, Shi and Svensson (2006), motivated by their own theoretical model, employ cross-country data on government corruption, and find that this institutional outcome helps explain the variation in the size of PBCs between developed and developing countries.

According to rational PBC theories, one would expect incumbents who do not run for re-election to be unwilling to incur the costs of signaling competency and, thus, not to behave opportunistically. Using data for Portuguese municipalities, Aidt, Veiga, and Veiga (2011) find empirical support for this hypothesis. By reducing rents from holding office, term limits may also decrease politicians' incentives to trigger PBCs (Smart and Sturm, 2013). Empirical studies on the impact of term limits on PBCs mainly focus on local and state governments, and most papers conclude that PBCs are lower in jurisdictions with term limit laws (List and Sturm, 2006; Klein and Sakurai, 2015; Padovano and Petrarca, 2014; Lopes da Fonseca, 2016; Veiga and Veiga, 2019).

Fiscal Rules and Other Constraints on the Executive

Budget balance requirements are likely to constraint policymakers' ability to strategically manipulate fiscal policy for electoral gains. Supportive evidence for the idea that

stringent balanced budget rules dampen PBCs is found for American states (Rose, 2006). However, less effective rules, such as the European Stability and Growth Pact, do not seem to withhold policymakers from pursuing expansionary fiscal policies before elections (Mink and de Haan, 2006; Efthyvoulou, 2012). Other institutionalized constraints on the decision-power of executives, for example, checks and balances between the parts involved in the decision-making process, may also influence PBCs. Eibl and Lynge-Mangueira (2017), using a large panel of countries, conclude that political constraints on incumbents limit their ability to generate PBCs.

Factors Affecting the Capacity of Opportunistic Behavior to Yield Additional Votes

This sub-section focuses on conditional factors that determine the effectiveness of manipulative policies to increase the probability of winning (e.g., the presence/absence of informed voters).

Voter Informedness and Fiscal Policy Transparency

Besides government corruption (as mentioned earlier), Shi and Svensson (2006) also consider the informedness of voters a conditional factor for PBCs. The idea is that, to the extent that voters are less informed and thus less able to distinguish pre-electoral manipulations from politicians' competence, the incumbents benefit more from conducting pre-electoral manipulations. Empirically, using the prevalence of information dissemination (radio, in particular) and the degree of media freedom as a proxy, they find that voter informedness has a significant impact on the occurrence of PBCs.⁵ Similarly, Alt and Lassen (2006a, 2006b) and Klomp and de Haan (2013) argue that, besides the ability of the electorate to gather information about economic policy and incumbents' competence, the availability of such information, as captured by fiscal transparency, can affect the size of PBCs. Consistent with this argument, the authors show that countries with high fiscal transparency are associated with dampened PBCs.

Using a large panel dataset covering around 70 countries and data from 1975 to 2010, Veiga et al. (2017) compare the relative importance of several conditional factors for PBCs, and provide empirical evidence that the degree to which voters are informed about fiscal policy is the most important conditioning factor of PBCs on the budget deficit.⁶ Going a step further, they show that what is particularly important is the degree of media freedom, rather than the mere availability of means of information dissemination (including radios, newspapers, TV, and access to the Internet). In addition, they point out that media freedom is closely associated with fiscal transparency, implying the importance of the latter as a conditional factor for PBCs.⁷ At the local level, there is also evidence that media freedom reduces electoral manipulations (Akhmedov and Zhuravskaya, 2004) and that the disclosure of governments' balance sheets before

elections mitigates PBCs, particularly in areas with relatively many newspapers readers (Repetto, 2019).

Maturity of Democracies

Another factor that affects the effectiveness of electoral manipulations is the maturity of democracies. Brender and Drazen (2005) show that PBCs are more prominent in new rather than in established democracies. The idea is that, if voters are relatively inexperienced with electoral manipulations in the early days of democracies, opportunistic measures have greater chances of improving incumbents' re-election chances. In line with the view that budget deficits are little affected during elections under established democracies, some authors examine the existence of electoral effects in the composition of fiscal policy. Katsimi and Sarantides (2012), focusing on established democracies (19 OECD countries) over the 1972–1999 period, show that before elections, current expenditures increase at the expense of capital expenditures (so that total spending is kept constant) and deficits also remain unaffected, though direct taxes fall. The relationship between elections and change in the composition of government spending is studied by Brender and Drazen (2013) in a panel of 71 democracies from 1972 to 2009. Their results suggest that under established democracies (but not in new democracies), election years are associated with larger changes in expenditure composition than in other years.^{8,9}

Party age might be the underlying mechanism for the existence of more pronounced PBCs in younger democracies. Hanusch and Keefer (2014) argue that older parties are better at providing voters with information about the policy positions and competence of candidates and, therefore, more likely to mitigate information asymmetries that trigger electoral measures. Using a large panel of countries, they show that younger parties are more likely to rely on increases in expenditures before elections to enhance electoral support.

Salience of Noneconomic Voting

Efthyvoulou (2012) poses the argument that economic matters are not always at the top of the public's political agenda and voters' evaluation of the government performance may also depend on noneconomic matters for which the government is responsible (such as fighting terrorism and crime). As a result, the level of noneconomic voting may also affect both the incentives and the capacity of politicians to engineer PBCs. In line with this argument, the author shows that the higher the weight voters assign to noneconomic issues prior to elections, the weaker PBCs are, since fewer voters can be influenced by an electoral boom in targeted welfare spending. In a similar vein, Bove et al. (2017) show that politicians may use the tradeoff between social and military expenditure to advance their electoral aims. In particular, the authors find that politicians tend to sacrifice military spending (which is highly associated with noneconomic priorities) at election times in order to enable increases in social spending, with more direct and immediate impact on electoral outcomes. This so-called butter-versus-guns tradeoff, however, is smaller for countries involved in conflicts, where national security plays an important role in voter choice.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS ON THE RELEVANCE OF KEY CONDITIONAL FACTORS

The preceding review highlights a number of key conditional factors relevant for the creation of PBCs, both in terms of an election-driven increase in budget cycles, and a change in fiscal policy composition. In this section, we revisit the roles of those factors by conducting an empirical analysis of our own. The starting point of analysis is the study by Veiga et al. (2017), which investigates several conditioning factors of PBCs simultaneously, to compare the relative importance of different factors. Here, instead, we investigate the roles of different factors one by one. By doing this, our aim is to give substance to the review of context conditionality presented in the previous sections. It must be stressed, however, that due to data limitations, we cannot explore the importance of the full set of conditioning factors discussed in our review. Thus, we cannot exclude the possibility that some other factors matter too for a subgroup of our sampled countries, or for countries not included in our analysis.

The Dataset and Empirical Methodology

The empirical analysis uses an extension of the dataset used in Veiga et al. (2017). For brevity, a detailed explanation of all variables and their data sources is provided in the Appendix. The dataset only considers democratic regimes, which are defined as the value of *Polity2* from the *Polity IV* database being positive (the variable ranges from +10, strongly democratic, to -10, strongly autocratic). We consider presidential elections for presidential systems, and legislative elections for parliamentary systems and other systems where the president is not elected by universal suffrage. We create an election-year dummy that takes the value of one in the election year and zero in other years. Fiscal variables, all expressed as percentages of GDP, consist of central governments' total expenditure, total revenue and budget deficits (given as total expenditure minus revenue), and the key expenditure components of current and capital spending.¹⁰ Conditional factors highlighted are: (1) the predictability of the timing of elections, (2) electoral competitiveness, (3) electoral rules, (4) private gains for incumbents, (5) constraints on executives, (6) voter informedness, and (7) maturity of democracies, where the factors (1) to (5) are categorized in the previous section as those affecting incumbents' incentives and ability to act opportunistically, and (6) and (7) as those affecting the capacity of opportunistic behavior to yield additional votes. All the estimations include the following set of control variables that may affect the state of public finances: log of real GDP per capita, output gap as a logarithmic difference between real GDP and its trend (obtained using the Hodrick-Prescott filter), percentages of the population below 15 and above 65 years old, and year dummy variables.

The dataset covers the 1975–2016 period. Given that our panel data model (shown later) is dynamic, to mitigate the endogeneity problem caused by the presence of a lagged dependent variable that is correlated with country fixed effects, we only include countries with at least 10 annual observations in the sample. This criterion leaves 78 developed and developing countries that are democratic and for which data on all the fiscal variables mentioned previously are available. The reasonably high availability of observations per country (24 on average) helps justify the use of a fixed effects (FE) model, as opposed to, say a difference/system Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) approach. To mitigate an endogeneity problem due to simultaneity in FE estimations, all control variables were lagged one period. The descriptive statistics are presented in the Appendix.

The empirical specification used to examine the election-year effect on fiscal variables can be summarized as follows:

$$f_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_j f_{i,t-j} + \beta ELEC_{it} + X'_{it} \delta + y_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad i=1, \dots, N \quad t=1, \dots, T_i \quad (1)$$

where f_{it} is a fiscal variable in country i in year t and p is its number of lags included in the model (p is set to be one below), $ELEC_{it}$ is an election dummy variable, X_{it} is a vector of control variables specified previously, y_t are year dummies, μ_i is the effect of country i , and ε_{it} is the error term. α , β , and δ are parameters or vectors of parameters to be estimated. Next, to revisit the relevance of different conditional factors in the creation of PBCs, we extend equation (1) by including interaction terms between the election year dummy and different conditional factors:

$$f_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^p \alpha_j f_{i,t-j} + \beta_1 (ELEC_{it} * D_{it}) + \beta_2 (ELEC_{it} * (1 - D_{it})) + \varnothing D_{it} + X'_{it} \delta + y_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

where D_{it} is a dummy variable that proxies seven specific conditions mentioned. These are: (1) predetermined election, which assumes the value of one in each year of a constitutionally fixed term when the election is held in the last year of the term, and equals zero otherwise; (2) close election, which takes one in each year during the term (both for predetermined and nonpredetermined elections) when the difference in vote shares between the major government party and opposition parties (or candidates in presidential elections) in the previous election is smaller than 10 percentage points, and 0 otherwise;¹¹ (3) proportional electoral rule, which takes the value of one when democracies are characterized by a proportional electoral system; (4) private benefits for politicians, which assumes the value of one when politicians' rents are above the sample median; (5) constraints on the executive, which equals one when institutionalized constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives are higher than the sample median; (6) media freedom, which takes the value of one if the degree of media freedom is higher than the sample median; and, finally, (7) established democracy, which takes the value of one after ten years have passed and four democratic elections have taken place after it became a democracy, and 0 otherwise.¹² In what follows,

equation (2) is estimated for different attributes, D_{it} , and for different fiscal variables, f_{it} . Our interest is to compare the parameters estimated, β_1 and β_2 , and make an inference as to conditional factors for PBCs.

Empirical Results

Table 12.1 summarizes the estimation results for different fiscal variables and different conditional factors. Panel A estimates equation (1) for all democracies, without conditioning on the factors listed earlier. The coefficient on budget deficits (percentage of GDP) is positive and significant, implying an election-year increase in deficits in general. The coefficient of 0.40 indicates that deficits are higher by 0.40 percentage points in election years than in nonelection years. Regarding what causes this rise in deficits, there is evidence that it is driven by a rise in total spending, particularly a rise in current spending. The sign on capital spending components is negative (though insignificant). This is somewhat in line with Rogoff (1990), who argues that capital expenditure, which often takes long to materialize, may not be as suitable to signal the incumbent policymaker's competence as is immediately observed current spending.

In Panel B, we investigate the relevance of the predictability of the timing of elections in PBCs. The indication of the previous literature is that PBCs are more prominent when the timing of election is predetermined. An election-year rise in deficits is statistically significant only under predetermined elections, although in our sample we cannot reject the hypothesis that the coefficients on predetermined and nonpredetermined interactions are significantly different. Again, the rise in deficits under predetermined elections is driven by a rise in spending, particularly current spending. Next, Panel C examines the relevance of electoral competitiveness. The result suggests that this factor is also a relevant conditional factor for PBCs. In particular, the coefficient on deficits is larger when elections are close (0.52), corresponding to a rise in total and current spending. Finally, Panel D examines the role of electoral rules. As mentioned previously, one key prediction from the literature on constitution-dependent PBCs is that majoritarian electoral systems are more susceptible to PBCs. Empirical results confirm this prediction: there is strong evidence of an increase in the deficit at electoral years under majoritarian electoral rules, and Wald tests allow for the rejection of equal coefficients. The literature also suggests that different electoral rules induce electoral cycles in different components of public spending. Specifically, proportional electoral rules induce politicians to seek support among broad coalitions of voters, while majoritarian electoral rules instead induce them to target spending toward narrow (geographical) groups of voters. One implication is thus that, under proportional rules, infrastructure spending, which is often region-specific and capital-intensive, may not be used to generate votes. This, indeed, is consistent with the result that the coefficient on capital spending under proportional rules is significantly lower than the one under majoritarian rules (the *p*-value of the Wald test is 0.06).

Table 12.1: Conditional Factors in PBCs: Timing, Competitiveness and Electoral Rules

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Variables	Deficits	Total spend	Cur spend	Cap spend	Total rev
<i>A: All democracies</i>					
elec	0.404*** (3.004)	0.313* (1.971)	0.331** (2.070)	-0.007 (-0.203)	-0.085 (-0.684)
<i>B: Timing of elections</i>					
pred_elec	0.514*** (3.444)	0.340* (1.700)	0.405** (2.000)	-0.046 (-1.073)	-0.162 (-0.917)
nonpred_elec	0.105 (0.437)	0.234 (0.767)	0.120 (0.412)	0.103 (1.602)	0.111 (0.681)
Wald, p-value	0.129	0.783	0.444	0.0553	0.316
<i>C: Electoral competitiveness</i>					
close_elec	0.519*** (2.928)	0.485* (1.897)	0.571** (2.225)	-0.070 (-1.400)	-0.037 (-0.160)
notclose_elec	0.270 (1.469)	0.106 (0.563)	0.033 (0.180)	0.076 (1.323)	-0.139 (-0.959)
Wald, p-value	0.305	0.262	0.110	0.0644	0.748
<i>D: Electoral rule</i>					
prop_elec	0.275 (1.533)	0.386 (1.150)	0.492 (1.452)	-0.087* (-1.853)	0.159 (0.663)
maj_elec	0.491** (2.630)	0.225* (1.787)	0.150 (1.346)	0.078 (1.423)	-0.296* (-1.798)
Wald, p-value	0.0572	0.642	0.373	0.0687	0.368
Observations	1,863	1,863	1,863	1,863	1,863
Countries	78	78	78	78	78

Notes: Panel A estimates equation (1). Panels B to D estimate equation (2). Only coefficients on interaction terms are shown for brevity. Wald test tests the equality of coefficients across the interaction terms. Robust t-statistics in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

The level of private benefits obtained while in office is also likely to condition the occurrence of PBCs. Table 12.2 presents evidence supporting this hypothesis. For higher levels of rents, proxied by the institutional index (Shi and Svensson, 2006), there is evidence of an increase in the deficit, total expenditures, and current expenditures during electoral years. Additionally, results suggest that, when private rents are low, capital expenditures are reduced at electoral periods. The hypothesis of equal coefficients for

Table 12.2: Conditional Factors in PBCs: Private Gains

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Variables	Deficits	Total spend	Cur spend	Cap spend	Total rev
<i>Institutional index</i>					
Rents_high_elec	0.596*** (2.788)	0.493* (1.956)	0.468* (1.848)	0.044 (0.756)	−0.097 (−0.488)
Rents_low_elec	0.132 (1.089)	0.080 (0.456)	0.153 (0.870)	−0.073** (−2.469)	−0.038 (−0.286)
Wald, p-value	0.0533	0.169	0.290	0.0709	0.795
Observations	1,771	1,771	1,771	1,771	1,771
Countries	73	73	73	73	73

Notes: Estimates of equation (2). Only coefficients on interaction terms are shown for brevity. Wald test tests the equality of coefficients across the interaction terms. Robust t-statistics in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

high and low levels of the institutional index in election years can be rejected for the deficit and capital expenditures. Note that the number of observations is smaller than in Table 12.1 because data for the institutional index, obtained from the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG), is only available since 1984.

Two variables are used to proxy constraints on executives that are likely to influence PBCs. First, we use the indicator *Xconst* obtained from Polity IV that measures the extent of institutionalized constraints on the decision-making powers of chief executives. Second, we use the indicator *checks and balances* from the Database of Political Institutions (DPI), which increases, for example, if the chief executive is competitively elected or when the opposition controls the legislature. As can be seen from Table 12.3, regardless of the proxies used, there is strong evidence that PBCs occur only at lower levels of executive constraints. These results are in line with those obtained by Eibl and Lynge-Mangueira (2017).

Table 12.4 turns to the remaining conditions. Previous literature has shown that voters' informedness reduces PBCs. To proxy for the percentage of uninformed voters, Shi and Svensson (2006) use an index of media diffusion that considers the prevalence of information dissemination (radio, in particular) and the degree of media freedom. Since data on the number of radios per capita from the Cross-National Time-Series (CNTS) database is only available until 1999, we do not present estimates using the index of media diffusion but we focus instead on media freedom. Veiga et al. (2017) conclude that the prevalence of information devices itself is not a key driver of PBCs; the degree of media freedom is critical. Results reported in panel A of Table 12.4 strongly support this idea. Only at lower levels (below the median) of the overall Freedom of the

Table 12.3: Relevance of Conditional Factors in PBCs: Constraints on Executives

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Variables	Deficits	Total spend	Cur spend	Cap spend	Total rev
<i>A: Constraint on chief executive</i>					
Const_low_elec	0.970*** (3.113)	0.765* (1.760)	0.740* (1.675)	0.065 (0.620)	−0.268 (−0.662)
Const_high_elec	0.199 (1.632)	0.149 (1.060)	0.181 (1.332)	−0.033 (−1.126)	−0.023 (−0.273)
Wald, p-value	0.0187	0.183	0.227	0.371	0.554
<i>B: Checks and balances</i>					
Checks_low_elec	0.507*** (3.494)	0.476** (2.444)	0.495** (2.507)	−0.003 (−0.066)	−0.024 (−0.172)
Checks_high_elec	−0.058 (−0.283)	−0.109 (−0.398)	−0.087 (−0.330)	−0.028 (−0.841)	−0.021 (−0.156)
Wald, p-value	0.0286	0.0894	0.0828	0.666	0.987
Observations	1,863	1,863	1,863	1,863	1,863
Countries	78	78	78	78	78

Notes: Panels A and B estimate equation (2). Only coefficients on interaction terms are shown for brevity. Wald test tests the equality of coefficients across the interaction terms. Robust t-statistics in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Press scores from Freedom House is there evidence of electoral manipulations of deficit, total, and current spending. The Wald test for the equality of coefficients for low and high levels of media freedom allows us to reject the null hypothesis of equal coefficients. Finally, Panel B examines the role of maturity of democracies. Indeed, as emphasized by Brender and Drazen (2005), the rise in deficits is observed particularly under new democracies, rather than established democracies.

FURTHER REVIEW OF CONDITIONALITY OF PBCs: INCUMBENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Recently, interest on how political leaders' characteristics affect their policy choices has increased. Following this literature, this section focuses on the conditionality of PBCs based on incumbents' characteristics, rather than on politico-economic factors considered earlier. Several studies highlight that politicians' preferences depend on their personal traits and, therefore, voters with similar traits are favored by the adopted

Table 12.4: Relevance of Conditional Factors in PBCs: Voters' Informedness

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Variables	Deficits	Total spend	Cur spend	Cap spend	Total rev
<i>A: Media freedom</i>	Media_low_elec	0.613***	0.652**	0.649**	0.030
0.028		(2.867)	(2.219)	(2.206)	(0.461)
(0.119)	Media_high_elec	0.196	−0.007	0.033	−0.045
−0.179		(1.535)	(−0.045)	(0.214)	(−1.442)
(−1.650)	Wald, p-value	0.0794	0.0660	0.0803	0.299
0.445	Observations	1,854	1,854	1,854	1,854
1,854	Countries	78	78	78	78
78	<i>B: Maturity of democracies</i>	new_elec	0.700***	0.416	0.527
−0.083	−0.283		(2.985)	(1.280)	(1.575)
(−1.441)	(−0.887)	estab_elec	0.203	0.243	0.197
0.044	0.049		(1.440)	(1.508)	(1.343)
(1.011)	(0.462)	Wald, p-value	0.0572	0.642	0.373
0.0687	0.368	Observations	1,863	1,863	1,863
1,863	1,863	Countries	78	78	78
78	78				

Notes: Panels A and B estimate equation (2). Only coefficients on interaction terms are shown for brevity. Wald test tests the equality of coefficients across the interaction terms. Robust t-statistics in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

policies. Among these attributes, education (Besley et al., 2011; Martínez-Bravo, 2017), gender (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Svaleryd, 2009; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014), age (Alesina et al., 2015), social class, and ethnicity (Carnes and Lupu, 2015; Pande, 2003) have received particular attention in the literature. In this section, we focus on incumbents' personal traits that may change their incentives and ability to engender PBCs.

Political budget cycles may be contingent on incumbents' age for several reasons. Younger politicians may care more about career prospects, may have a lower discount rate, and may be more energetic and productive at work. Using data for Italian municipalities, Alesina et al. (forthcoming) provide empirical support for the first hypothesis. Their results suggest that younger mayors are more likely to strategically increase investment and attract more transfers from the central government before elections because of stronger career concerns.

Several papers find that gender has an effect on policy decisions (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Svaleryd, 2009; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014) and corruption levels (Swamy et al., 2001; Dollar et al., 2001). Focusing on Brazilian municipalities, Brollo and Troiano (2016) conclude that female mayors are less likely to be involved in

administrative irregularities and to hire temporary public employees during electoral periods. They also receive fewer campaign contributions than men, which reduces the influence of private interests, namely in terms of allocation of government contracts.

Finally, belonging to a political dynasty, a family in which several members have had elected offices, is also likely to condition public policies. Studies have shown that dynastic leaders enjoy an electoral advantage, which facilitates the enforcement of their preferred policy agenda and contributes to dynastic persistence (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Feinstein, 2010; Querubin, 2016; Rossi, 2017). Additionally, dynastic leaders receive greater returns from holding office, which gives them a higher incentive to remain in office. Focusing on Italian municipalities, Daniele and Vertier (2016) show that political power is persistent and that dynastic mayors, who are eligible to run for re-election, are more likely to increase spending, particularly capital spending, in pre-electoral periods.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter we review the vast literature on PBCs, focusing on studies that analyze the conditionality of opportunistic effects. To complement the review, we also investigate the electoral effects on central governments' deficit, expenditure, and revenue series, under various political arrangements, on a large panel of countries covering 78 countries and 42 years of data (1975 to 2016).

Empirical results confirm the consensus from the previous literature that budget cycles are not universal. Specifically, an election-year increase in budget deficits is more likely to occur under certain politico-institutional circumstances, including predetermined elections, close (disputed) elections, majoritarian electoral rules, larger private benefits from holding office, weak constraints on executives, a high proportion of uninformed voters, and new democracies. Furthermore, in line with the literature, we show that the nature of electoral cycles differs depending on the fiscal policy component examined. For instance, we often observe that an election-year increase in budget deficits is driven by current, rather than capital spending. However, when electoral rules are considered as the conditioning factor, the evidence seems to suggest that, under majoritarian electoral rules, capital spending is the main tool used by politicians to generate PBCs.

Recently, a substantial number of studies have explored the effects of personal characteristics of leaders on public policy. This chapter also reviewed this emerging strand of literature, which sheds light on the impact of gender, age, and social class of incumbents on the occurrence of PBCs. This is a promising line of research that is likely to expand as more data becomes available, most likely at the local government level. Regarding how the literature on PBCs may evolve in the future, it is also expected that insights from behavioral public policy would enrich the analysis further. Another interesting avenue for research is to focus on voters' informedness, and

investigate the effects of access to the Internet, and particularly social media, on electoral outcomes and PBCs.

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NOTES

1. For a survey of the literature on “political business cycles” see Dubois (2016).
2. Veiga et al. (2017) use a dataset that covers 69 countries from 1975 to 2010. We updated their dataset by using recent data from GFS up to 2016.
3. For example, capital spending needs to go through multiple stages of project appraisal and selection, even before the implementation stage is reached.
4. The partisan cycle theories (Hibbs, 1977; Alesina, 1987) assert that left-wing and right-wing governments choose different fiscal policies when in office, that reflect the interests and preferences of their class-defined core political constituencies (working class and capital owners, respectively). The existing empirical evidence strongly supports partisan effects on the size of the government, and moderately supports partisan effects in some specific policy areas, such as social and welfare spending. In many cases, however, the evidence seems to suggest that partisan governments’ resource to these policies, and the emergence of partisan fiscal cycles, depend heavily on their international and domestic politico-economic context (see Clark, 2003; Bove et al., 2017), as in the case of PBCs.
5. Further, using a panel of 93 democracies, Shelton (2014) finds empirical evidence that media freedom is relevant to mitigate PBCs.
6. They compare the importance of voter informedness with other conditional elements, such as the predictability of the timing of elections, electoral competitiveness, electoral rules, and the maturity of democracies.
7. To elaborate, Veiga et al. (2017) do not directly include fiscal transparency in their formal comparison of different conditions for PBCs due to the limited availability of its proxy. However, they show that correlation between media freedom and fiscal transparency is rather high.
8. A few papers test for PBCs on the composition of spending on panels of developing countries, including Schuknecht (2000), Block (2002), and Vergne (2009). They focus on the choice between capital and current expenditures. According to Schuknecht (2000), public works are more easily used to woo the electorate in developing countries than current expenditures that are frequently based on long-term commitments. Block (2002) argues that the asymmetry of information regarding competence is more plausible in developing countries, and that the share of capital expenditures in total expenditures decreases during the election year. Vergne (2009) reports evidence of a shift from current expenditures to capital expenditures in pre-election periods.

9. Moreover, a number of papers investigate the electoral effects of fiscal policy composition by looking at data for state and local elections, instead of concentrating solely on national elections (e.g., Blais and Nadeau, 1992; Khemani, 2004; Veiga and Veiga, 2007; Drazen and Eslava, 2010).
10. While the fiscal dataset is based on the IMF's GFS, some clarification is in order. In particular, because fiscal variables in GFS underwent key methodological changes over the years, most notably a change in the accounting method from cash to accrual systems (corresponding to the transition from GFS Manual 1986 to 2001), it is important to pay attention to the comparability of the data over the sample period. This is particularly important when one wants to consider spending components following economic classifications (as we do here). For instance, the accrual concept of "consumption of fixed capital," which represents a decline in the value of government's fixed assets due to physical deterioration, obsolescence, or accidental damages, does not exist in the GFSM1986 cash system. The indication is that capital spending concepts under the cash and accrual systems are not comparable as they are, because "depreciation" of capital is not deducted from capital spending under the former system. Acknowledging this, throughout the sample period, we use a capital spending variable that includes consumption of fixed capital, while using a current spending variable that excludes it.
11. Since politicians engage in fiscal policy manipulations in the immediate period before the elections (based on the information that they have at that time), a better way to capture the closeness of the upcoming elections is to employ pre-electoral poll data on voting intention (see Efthymoulou, 2012). However, information on public opinion trends can only be obtained for a limited number of countries and years in our sample.
12. Some supplementary information for the conditional dummies is in order. Regarding the electoral rule, it is often the case that proportional and majoritarian systems coexist within a country. To deal with this, the dummy for proportional electoral system takes the value of 1 in a given year when a democracy is characterized by the "pure" proportional system (i.e., not employing the majoritarian system even as a part). Thus, when the dummy variable takes the value of zero, it captures the democracy where the proportional system can still be used alongside the majoritarian system. To proxy private gains for politicians we use an adaptation of the institutional index proposed by Shi and Svensson (2006), which is constructed from four indices extracted from the International Country Risk Guide: law and order, corruption, bureaucracy quality, and investment profile. To measure constraints on executives we use, alternatively, the indicator *Xconst* from *Polity IV* (Eibl and Lynge-Mangueira, 2017) and the indicator *checks* from the Database of Political Institutions. The freedom of broadcast (from Freedom House) is used as a proxy for media freedom (see Veiga et al., 2017, for the detailed explanation of how the proxy is constructed). New, as opposed to established, democracy is simply defined as democracy which is not categorized as established democracy.

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APPENDIX

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Description and Source
Central Government Expenditures and Revenues (source: GFS—IMF)						
CGdeficit_gdp	1,863	2.01	3.80	−27.26	32.04	Budget deficit (%GDP)
CG1_gdp	1,863	26.86	10.97	4.98	168.26	Total revenue (%GDP)
CGexpenditure_gdp	1,863	28.87	11.19	6.34	148.51	Total expenditure (%GDP)
CG2_gdp	1,863	26.91	11.16	5.03	134.77	Expense (current expenditure, excl. consumption of fixed capital, %GDP)
CG31_gdp	1,863	1.96	1.59	−7.98	14.24	Investment in nonfinancial assets (capital expenditure, incl. consumption of fixed capital, %GDP)
Democracy (sources: Polity IV)						
Established democ.	1,863	0.86	0.35	0.00	1.00	Established democracy—after 10 years have passed and 4 democratic elections have taken place after it became a democracy (Polity IV)
New democracy	1,863	0.14	0.35	0.00	1.00	New democracy = 1—Estab. democ. (Polity IV)
Institutions (sources: Freedom House, CNTS, and ICRG)						
Media Freedom	1,854	69.75	17.02	17.00	95.00	Freedom of the Press Score (Freedom House)
Institutional Index	1,863	3.81	4.71	−10.27	12.40	Institutional index similar to Shi and Svensson (2006) (ICRG)
Executive constraints	1,863	5.95	6.92	1	7	Xconst (Polity IV)
Checks and balances	1,863	3.84	1.68	1	18	Checks (DPI)
Elections and type of system (source: DPI—World Bank)						
Elec	1,863	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00	Election year for the government leader (president or prime minister)
Pred_elec	1,863	0.18	0.38	0.00	1.00	Election year for the government leader (president or prime minister). Only predetermined elections considered.
Prop	1,859	0.80	0.40	0.00	1.00	Proportional representation dummy

CHAPTER 13

INCREMENTALISM AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

KAI WEGRICH

INCREMENTALISM is among the classic approaches to public policy that have something to contribute to questions of political time. Although the word “time” does not feature prominently in the concept of incrementalism as developed by the main protagonists, Charles Lindblom and Aaron Wildavsky, the associations between incrementalism and the politics of time are rather obvious: incrementalism stands for sequential, small-scale and slow policy or institutional changes. But as this chapter will argue, the relation between incrementalism and the politics of time goes beyond equalizing incremental with slow and limited change. Linking incrementalism with questions of the politics of time offers new insights on policy and institutional change. As the chapter will show, the different temporal dimensions of relevance for the analysis of policy processes—timing (what happens when); sequence (what happens in which order); speed; and duration (what happens for how long); and the time budgets and time horizons of political actors (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Howlett and Goetz, 2014)—play different roles in different conceptions of incrementalism. While the original concept of incrementalism mainly focuses on the (low) speed of change, more recent variations not only engage more directly with other dimensions of time but also come to other assessments of the time dynamics of incremental policy processes.

Incrementalism as a concept has suffered from criticism for its status as an analytical concept in policy research and as a viable reform strategy. Its descriptive accuracy has been reconsidered by models that capture slow-moving incrementalism as a process that can be replaced by shorter periods of rapid and comprehensive changes—the theory of “punctuated equilibrium” is the most important approach making that argument (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). As a guide for reforms, incrementalism has widely been equalized with low ambition for change, both in terms of the magnitude of change and its underlying intelligence. The concept might capture the often-observed slowness of change, stickiness of institutions, and the difficulties in overcoming resistance to

change by vested interests; but this kind of “muddling through” should not guide actors as to what they should do.

However, the “teens” of the twenty-first century have seen some contributions that point at the comparative advantage of incrementalism as a reform concept, avoiding the fallacies of comprehensive institutional reform strategies (Bersch, 2019; Mangla, 2018) and allowing for the systematic use of evidence in testing small-scale policy changes (Halpern and Mason, 2015). Another variation of incrementalism—tactical incrementalism—is using small-scale and provisional interventions to change the power structures around a particular policy or public service issue by activating the support of (new) users (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). These contributions emphasize the specific advantages of incremental change and reforms in contrast to comprehensive approaches, and their argumentation contributes in different ways to an understanding of the nature of over-time developments in public policy, administrative reform, and institutional change that is genuine to the concept of incrementalism. While incrementalism has been treated as a somewhat boring sidekick in accounts of time in the policy process—path dependency, approaches of cyclical change, and the punctuated equilibrium model have received most attention by policy and public administration researchers (cf. Pollitt, 2008)—this chapter shows that the contribution of incrementalism to the analysis of time in the policy process goes much beyond that role.

This chapter explores the role of incrementalism for policy and institutional change, and how this is related to the politics of time. On the basis of a short recap of the original concept, the criticism it received, and alternatives promoted, the chapter argues that equalizing incremental change with status quo orientation, short time horizons, and slow and limited change is an underestimation of the concept and its potential to generate rapid changes after a slow start. The chapter subsequently discusses “radical incrementalism” and “tactical incrementalism” as two contrasting approaches seeking to achieve this. In particular, the latter leads to uncovering the potential of incremental processes generating rapid change by changing the politics of policymaking. The chapter closes by summarizing how variations of incrementalism conceive different dimensions of time and by pointing at open questions for future research.

INCREMENTALISM AND ITS CRITICS

The notion and concept of incrementalism is the work of Charles E. Lindblom (1959, 1965, 1979; Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963; Lindblom and Cohen, 1979) and Aaron Wildavsky (1964), but its theoretical foundation is Herbert Simon’s concept of “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1957). Given that individuals—and by extension organizations—only have limited capacity to process information, ambition is reduced in decision-making: instead of seeking to “maximize” decision outcomes (the assumption of standard economics), actors are “satisficing” (the word is created from “satisfying” and

“suffice”). Instead of trying to use all available information and weighing up the costs and benefits of all potential options for action, actors settle with a limited search and selection process.

Lindblom applied this model of decision-making to policymaking and pitched it against the rational choice model and approaches to comprehensive planning that gained currency in the 1960 and early 1970s (and still dominates guidance for policy analysis and reform approaches to improve policymaking, such as impact assessment). In the rational model, which Lindblom also called the root method, means and ends of decision-making are separated and individuals, organizations, or governments should search for the most efficient means to achieve a goal that had been defined at an earlier stage. Lindblom’s analysis made familiar the major shortcomings of such an approach, the limits of available information, the lack of adequate theories and evaluation methods, and the high search costs of the root method. Much of the early work is about showing the deficiencies of the root method and giving credence to the alternative that is much more widely used in practice, that is, incremental analysis.

Incremental analysis, also called the branch method, breaks with the separation of means and ends—and in particular the sequence in which each becomes relevant (ends first, means second): decisions are made by looking at the combination of means and ends, and policymaking takes the form of small, incremental steps that can easily be corrected. Decision-makers and policy analysts take the status quo as a given and ask what to change “at the margins” (rather than considering all kinds of hypothetical options) (Lindblom, 1965, 144). In this process of piecemeal change, ends are adapted to the available means (rather than the other way around), and the process of comparing policy options is one of “successive limited comparisons” (Lindblom, 1959, 81). In other words: political actors are “muddling through.” Such “muddling through” is the result of cognitive limitations (bounded rationality) but also of the political realities of policymaking, including short time horizons of the different actors involved. Indeed, cognitive limitations and political realities are driving limited time horizons—actors do not even try to engage in long-term strategizing because they are aware of its fallacies (as a result of experience, mostly).

Lindblom’s concept of incrementalism entails two main elements. One is incremental analysis, which is contrasted by the model of rational analysis as outlined in preceding text (mainly developed in Lindblom [1959] and Braybrooke and Lindblom [1963]). The second element is the model of actor interaction (Lindblom, 1965). Here, Lindblom develops a concept of coordination in the policy process he calls “disjointed incrementalism,” where many actors engage in the policy process by focusing on their individual, partial, and limited perception of a policy problem (“selective perception” is another concept Herbert Simon developed). While “disjointed” refers to the absence of a hierarchical imposition of an overall strategy, coordination works through the adjustment of actors to the action of others (“partisan mutual adjustment”; Lindblom, 1965) or bargaining. Lindblom (1965, 3) argues that partisan mutual adjustment is pervasive in practice but understudied and undervalued as it can be a rational strategy for political leaders. While sequencing implicitly features in the analysis of different subtypes

of partisan mutual adjustment—where usually one actor responds to the action of another—no further significance is given to this concept.

The two components of incrementalism are connected: the “disjointed” nature of coordination in the policy process allows individual actors to rely on partial, incremental analysis—but the overall intelligence of the policymaking system still is high given the partial analysis of multiple actors (Lindblom, 1965). And hence the test for good policy is that there is wide agreement from different perspectives on a policy (but without anyone considering this option the best possible) (Lindblom, 1959, 81). In contrast, the root method of analysis implies a model of hierarchical coordination, and thus is limited by the capacity of the individual: “In the synoptic ideal the integration of parts remains an intellectual task for the analyst, and whatever closure is accomplished is attributable to, and therefore limited by, his capacities to understand the relationship of the parts” (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963, 140; cited in Premfors, 1981, 206). It is this consensus-orientation in the concept of incrementalism that became a key target of criticism arguing that the concept is inherently conservative serving dominant power structures, as discussed further in the next section.

Aaron Wildavsky, the second luminary of incrementalism, applied the concept to his seminal studies on the politics of budgeting (Wildavsky, 1964). At the center of his argument are (again) complexity, cognitive limitations to calculation, and short time horizons. He argues that, given the complexity of a government’s budget, the web of expectations, commitments, and precedents of previous budgets, the decision-making process of budgeting is limited to the proverbial tip of the iceberg, that is, annual changes of the budget. The iceberg below the waterline is the main share of the budget that is not subject to change or even debate—because it entails longer-term commitments and the “base” that a department or an agency received to run its business more or less as in previous years. Above the waterline is the margin that is subject to negotiations, and agencies fight for their “fair share” in times of budget growth or reductions. Taking last year’s budget as a precedent and starting point for the budgetary process reduces the complexity of the task—and leads to the pattern of incremental budgeting, that is, that annual changes remain limited to changes at the margin. Incremental analysis is one of the “aids to calculation” that actors in the budgetary process use to simplify an overly complex task. Like Lindblom, incrementalism is seen as a method of analysis and as a device of conflict resolution in the budgetary process—both spending agencies and appropriation committees (in the US Congress) play by the rules of incrementalism when proposing budgets and deciding about those proposals.

There is a subtle dialectic in Wildavsky’s account of the budgetary process in relation to time. On the one hand, the entire process is shaped by time compression and short time horizons of actors who settle for acceptable decisions in light of complexity and multiactor constellations. But the construction of the “base” of an agency can only be the result of repeated (annual) interactions and decisions—and a result that actors aspire to achieve in order to secure funding for the longer term.

As Lindblom on the general policymaking process, Wildavsky used his—at that time ground-breaking—political analysis of the budgetary process to criticize reform ideas

following the logic of the root method. Wildavsky argued that reform approaches such as the planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) are bound to fail given the complexity of the budgetary process (Wildavsky, 1979, chapter 6). Reforming the budgetary process without understanding and changing the underlying politics would, according to Wildavsky, not work and only increase the level of conflict and the burden of calculation (Wildavsky, 1979, 219) (an argument that still gets lost in subsequent debates about the potential of “performance budgets”). A key implication of Wildavsky’s analysis of the budgetary process was hence a reinforcement of Lindblom’s arguments in favor of incremental analysis of public policies more widely (Wildavsky, 1979, 220).

That does not mean, however, that incrementalism is inevitable in budgeting or no reform of the incremental method is possible. In terms of reforms, he argued for a more “thorough incremental analysis” rather than comprehensive strategies. As he identified time pressure within a budget cycle as one factor contributing to the complexity of budgeting, the extension of budget cycles in many countries since the 1990s is in line with that thinking. In terms of budgetary processes, he considered that the political and institutional conditions that provided the basis for incremental budgeting might possibly change.

Wildavsky’s claim that “budgeting is incremental” was one of the major targets of critique of the whole concept of incrementalism. In essence, empirical evidence did not confirm that budgeting is generally incremental. In a series of papers and books, Baumgartner and Jones (2010; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Jones, True, and Baumgartner, 1997) show that periods of incremental budget development are at points replaced by more comprehensive changes—overall and within individual policy fields. “The overall pattern of budget change is characterized by large-scale disruptions, even if the vast majority of changes from year to year are very small” (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005, 115). For them, incrementalism covers an important part of reality, but another important part are “punctuations” of stable situations (“equilibria”) that occur from time to time, when enough pressure for change has built up in the system over time (as measured in policy agendas, i.e., media reports, congressional hearings, etc.). At the same time, “bounded rationality” is constitutive to the theory of punctuated equilibrium (see also Jones, 2001). An important building block of Baumgartner and Jones’s theory is the notion of “disproportionate information processing”: new information challenging established policy frames is long ignored and action is delayed until an overreaction occurs, which leads to rather far-reaching policy change. In other words, disproportionate information processing can explain both incrementalism and fundamental change (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005). It is important to emphasize that the theoretical building blocks of incrementalism (bounded rationality, limitation to analysis) are integrated into the theory of punctuated equilibrium, as is the observation that policy change is often incremental.

The theory of punctuated equilibrium found its own critics in scholars of historical institutionalism that pointed at the lack of attention to fundamental power and policy shifts resulting from incremental processes (Pierson, 2015). Mahoney and Thelen have, jointly and individually, developed the theoretical building blocks for explaining how

incremental change can lead to fundamental changes over time (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The three mechanisms of incremental institutional change they identify—layering, convergence, and drift—have been widely used in research that showed incremental reforms can lead to fundamental change. Their theory is mostly critical; that is, they point at problematic effects of incremental institutional change. While their point is not to advocate for comprehensive reform, their work is about uncovering the (political) mechanisms of change that are not easily identified when only looking at major reforms or policy changes (i.e., those covered in the data of the comparative agenda project, <https://www.comparativeagendas.net/>). Apart from raising important questions about political power, they paint a picture of political development in the United States that contrasts with the image conveyed by the punctuated equilibrium model. In particular Pierson, in his joint work with Hacker (Hacker and Pierson, 2010), pointed at the accumulation of inequality in American society and linked this to the power dynamics in US politics, which is increasingly biased toward the interest of the wealthy and powerful lobby groups (Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen, 2015). And looking at incremental institutional change, including policy implementation, is the matching theoretical perspective to uncover such developments (Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen, 2015).

In short, as a positive theory, incrementalism has been confirmed many times, but the concept has been further developed to capture the alternation of slow and rapid changes. Both critics and counter critics have considered incrementalism as slow-moving and limited, and to be contrasted with a process of change that is fast and comprehensive at the same time. However, more recent theorizing has also pointed at the potentially fundamental changes resulting from incrementalism, using the approach for a critical analysis of the political economy.

COMPETING REFORM STRATEGIES

Critical engagement with incrementalism extends beyond questions concerning the concept's analytical value or explanatory validity. Indeed, incrementalism has received stronger and sustained pushback related to the normative implications of the concept. Lindblom's incrementalism was designed in contrast to models of rational and comprehensive planning that flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s. Lindblom also claimed that incremental analysis and politics (disjointed incrementalism) can be a rational form of action, not only a second-best option to be pursued because higher levels of rationality cannot always be achieved. Wildavsky wrote a range of essays criticizing the way policy analysis took a foothold in the US government, that is, following the rational model of policy analysis and ignoring the interactive (or political) dimension. He criticized cost-benefit analysis, program budgets and PPBS, planning, and other reform concepts from the perspective that he developed in his analysis of the budgetary process (Wildavsky, 1969, 1973).

The loudest critique of incrementalism as a reform concept responded to its lack of ambition. The publication of “the science of muddling through” (Lindblom, 1959) quickly triggered critical responses from the policy analysis community. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the perceived urgency of policy problems joined a belief in rational and long-term planning and policymaking. Incrementalism might be suitable for simple problems and stable situations, but for the type of problems that governments have to deal with since the 1960s, their scale and speed of development, “muddling through” is not enough (Dror, 1964). Not unlike the 2010s, incremental approaches to policy change, even if accurate as descriptions, were seen as inappropriate guidance in light of the problem load. Dror (1964) admitted the limits to rational policymaking but considered incrementalism as an “ideological reinforcement of the pro-inertia and anti-innovation forces” (cited in Premfors, 1981, 207). There was a general critique and debate about the balance between (incrementalist) realism and (comprehensive) reform ambition, leading to compromises such as “mixed scanning” (Etzioni, 1967), which sought to limit incrementalism to secondary issues but apply more comprehensive analysis to major decisions and issues. Lindblom’s (1964) rebuttal argument to Dror (1964)—that incrementalism can actually lead to fundamental social change as a result of incremental steps—has not resonated at that point in the debate. Both in terms of speed and scope of change, Lindblom refutes the widespread image that incrementalism is necessarily slow or limited to minor changes. Like the concept of incrementalism itself, this debate had a political and an epistemic dimension, which will be discussed in turn in the next section.

The Politics of Incrementalism versus Comprehensive Reform

The critique of the politics of incrementalism points to the inherently conservative nature of incrementalism as a reform strategy. The point is not only the lack of ambition but specifically the subservience to existing power structures. Overcoming the resistance of vested interests, for example, by powerful lobby groups, requires long-term and “active” policymaking (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1975). The combination of short time horizons and slowness of change is, in the critique of incrementalism, considered as equalizing as accepting existing power structures and institutional structures as a given that cannot be changed.

The critique and countermodels continue to shape reform debates until today. Bersch (2019) reviews the various reform models in the context of good governance reforms in developing and emerging market countries and identifies “powering” as the strategy dominating debates. “Powering” aims at reforming institutional systems comprehensively and rapidly, led by politicians with a strong mandate and supported by a small group of loyal public managers. According to the advocates of this reform model, found in international organizations (e.g., the World Bank) but also in academia (according to Bersch, 2019), the rapidness and top-down nature of “powering” could overcome vested interest and institutional veto positions. The scholarly equivalent is the veto power or

player theory that considers the consensus requirements for policy change as the major obstacle to reform (Tsebelis, 2002; Immergut 1990). Another supporting argument is the political economy of executive politicians, who could generally only allow the short-to medium-term costs of reform at the beginning of a term—when they cannot be made responsible for performance dips and have enough time to politically benefit from a future increase of performance resulting from reforms (Scharpf, 1986).

Bersch's counterargument is that comprehensive reforms come with major downsides. For one, institutional systems that allow for comprehensive reforms (with a limited number of veto players) are at risk of producing repeated policy reversals, that is, U-turns that undermine the effectiveness and consistency of institutional development. Counterintuitively, comprehensive reform approaches ("powering") end up being more short-termed due to the risk of frequent policy reversals in polities that allow for rapid and comprehensive reforms.

Second, comprehensive reforms mobilize opposition since the losers of reforms are concentrated and their loss is very transparent. These groups have incentives to undermine the implementation of reforms and new institutional rules. Lindvall (2017) makes a broadly similar argument, suggesting that in a context with few veto players, reformers have limited incentives to pay off losers of reforms—who hence have incentives to oppose reforms during implementation or engage in countermobilization.

In contrast, incremental reform strategies driven by "technocrats" within the policymaking bureaucracy would avoid such countermobilization and could hope for positive reinforcement and feedback of successful reforms. Bersch (2019) calls this second strategy "problem solving," and her empirical analysis compares administrative reforms in Argentina (many subsequently failing comprehensive reforms) and Brazil (incremental but relatively successful and expanding reforms).

Mangla (2018) develops a broadly similar argument in his account of primary school education in India, stressing the role of "layering" as an incremental reform strategy that ultimately aimed at expanding primary school education. Note that the choice of incrementalism is often driven by the lack of political capacity to change institutions in a comprehensive way (due to the strength of veto players).

The differences in strategies can be cast in the logic of sequences: major, big, "break-through" changes first in the comprehensive approach, with subsequent steps limited to smaller implementation and adjustment measures. In contrast, incrementalists start with small steps that slowly grow out of a limited context (such as a single agency), where a more general rule change is part of the later expansion of reforms. In contrast to the conventional image, actors following the incremental reform model have a more long-term view, while comprehensive reforms are pursued by actors with short time horizons.

In a nutshell, while incrementalism can politically fail in the face of vested interests with veto powers, incremental change strategies could be politically successful through positive feedback generated by successful reforms implemented without mobilizing opposition. Comprehensive reforms could be successful by overcoming resistance with a

strong political mandate but could fail by way of mobilizing opposition and are vulnerable to repeated policy reversals.

The Evaluation Problem

Lindblom developed incrementalism as a more realistic but possibly also smarter form of policy evaluation, relying on partial analysis of a variety of actors. He also pitched the original “branch model” of “successive limited comparisons” as reducing or eliminating the reliance on theory (Lindblom, 1959, 81). This limited role of theory was strongly criticized by Goodin (1982); Elster (1987) made broadly similar arguments without engaging with incrementalism directly. They questioned the validity of the claim that small (policy) changes can be easily evaluated and policymaking systems can hence correct these small changes if evaluations point at unintended or limited effects. Goodin (1982) argues that this claim is misleading: without a theory that connects incremental steps toward a more distant end point, the useful evaluation of early or intermediate steps is impossible. Is the lack of success of one incremental step an indication of implementation deficits or does it point at a general problem with the program theory of the respective policy or institutional reform? “Black box incrementalism”—Goodin’s term for the atheoretical form of incrementalism—“cannot possibly know how to interpret the feedback. It is not enough to know that you did something at t_1 and t_2 , something good or bad happened. You also need to know what would have happened at t_2 without your intervention” (Goodin, 1982, 22). The policy evaluator is basically flying blind (and lacking navigation tools), and counterfactuals are required to change that. The generic problem of any evaluation, establishing causality, is not solved by limiting change to small steps.

According to Goodin, black box incrementalism is particularly limited when dealing with complex policy or institutional changes. Note that incrementalism does not exclude complex changes, but the path to them is by way of small steps. However, Goodin and Elster argue that the separate evaluation of single elements does not help when the effect of change is produced by the interaction of different elements of change. This critique is echoed in debates about public service and public management reform. For example, in his manifesto for choice as the superior model for governing public services, Le Grand (2007) responds to essentially any kind of criticism of the choice model, with a call for a more comprehensive implementation of the model—and the adoption of other policies that address unintended side-effects. As long as not all elements of the concept are implemented, a (negative) evaluation cannot be conclusive.

In short, while the original concept of incrementalism highlights the possibility to adapt quickly to the evaluation of small changes from different perspectives and hence the adaptability of strategies, the critique points at the difficulty of evaluating intermediate steps in a chain of incremental changes without theoretical guidance. Bersch (2019) extensively discusses the limits of planning comprehensive institutional change and assessing all possible implications of comprehensive reform. According to her, and

in line with Lindblom and Wildavsky, they overwhelm the analytical capacity of reform actors, leading to all kinds of unintended consequences that incremental reforms avoid.

Both the political and epistemic challenges of incremental reform strategies play important roles in varieties of incrementalism as reform concepts that have been developed in the “teens” of the twenty-first century. The following two sections discuss two such concepts that are relevant because they address these challenges—and because they have implications for the politics of time. “Radical incrementalism” addresses the lack of the “counterfactual” in incremental analysis by drawing on experimental methods, and “tactical incrementalism” contributes to the politics of incrementalism. Questions of time cut across all of these topics. In particular the association of incrementalism with slowness and limited change is taken up in the studies reviewed below.

RADICAL INCREMENTALISM

In his critique of incrementalism, Goodin (1982) not only engaged with Lindblom and Wildavsky as the key figures of the concept in political science. He also discussed a second type of incrementalism, which he called “epistemic incrementalism.” Goodin referred to the work of Campbell (1969), Rivlin (1971), and other key figures that promoted the use of randomized controlled policy trials as a key approach to policymaking. While those authors did not self-identify as incrementalists but pitched themselves as promoters of a variation of rational policymaking, Goodin considered the piecemeal approach to testing, evaluating, and scaling effective policy through controlled experiments as inherently incrementalist (see also Bobrow and Dryzek, 1987, 136–146). This type of incrementalism addresses the lack of a counterfactual—one of the key limitations of “black box incrementalism” discussed earlier.

While the enthusiasm for experimental policymaking waned in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, it saw a renewed boom since the early 2000s. Fueled by academic developments (the growing significance of experiments in economics and the rise of “behavioral economics”) and in the world of policy (the rise of philanthropy in development aid and the rise of the Nudge agenda first in the OECD world), randomized controlled trials were promoted as the gold standard of evidence-based policymaking. Most of the debate focused on the production of knowledge through trials, but a proto-theory of the policy process was formulated under the rubric of “radical incrementalism.” Halpern and Mason (2015), from the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT)—established as a unit within the UK government’s Cabinet Office and now a globally operating “social purpose company” with ownership distributed between the UK government, the foundation Nesta, and the employees of the BIT—introduced the term “radical incrementalism” to show both the *Wahlverwandschaft* with the old-style incrementalism and where the new approach departs. Behavioral insights is an approach to policy design that relies on the models of behavioral economics to design interventions that should change the behavior of (many) individuals without prescriptive regulation or substantial financial

incentives—but through the smart redesign of the “choice architecture,” that is, the physical, online, and social environment at the point of making decisions about consumption and other policy-relevant life (style) choices (“nudges”; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008).

The incremental element of “radical incrementalism” refers to the character of these interventions. These are small tweaks that might have the potential to influence behavior and make policy delivery more efficient. One prominent example used by the BIT is a trial using reminder letters sent to taxpayers, nudging them to comply with the official deadline for their tax declaration, and thus using a so-called social nudge that informs people about the (high) compliance level in the neighborhood. The randomized controlled trial carried out by the BIT in cooperation with the UK tax office (HMRC) has shown which type of wording in the letter leads to the highest increase in compliance (Halpern and Mason, 2015).

Halpern and Mason (2015) argue that such nudges cannot and should not replace more comprehensive reforms, but that such reforms are the work of politics, and are more difficult to plan and implement rationally. The place for incrementalism is below the radar of high politics, where technocrats can introduce small-scale changes that help to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of policy in different areas. The key difference to old-style incrementalism is the use of controlled experiments to test policy interventions and to only scale-up those policy designs that have proven to be effective in randomized controlled trials.

This is the radical element in the concept of “radical incrementalism.” The absence of a counterfactual, criticized by Goodin (1982) but much earlier also by Campbell (1969) and Rivlin (1971), is described as the key to finding out which measures are successful in the concept of radical incrementalism. Reviving the earlier reform movement, the behavioral movement introduced this counterfactual in a systematic way, using experimental designs that usually test variations of an intervention (different letter designs and messages in the tax example). Controlled experimentation claims to solve the evaluation problem and replaces guesswork with systematic evidence-based policymaking. Radical incrementalism seeks to speed up incremental change processes by placing policy choices on precise evidence of what works, and hence it reduces search costs as well as back-and-forth type of processes. In terms of the time horizon, it is not clear how far ahead a radical incrementalist (who is similar to Campbell’s [1969] experimental bureaucrat) actually plans. As radical incrementalism is supposed to work underneath the radar of political attention and focuses on changes that are of limited political relevance, it also does not seem to pursue longer-term strategies, other than applying the method of evidence-based policymaking.

However, the concept of radical incrementalism has two main Achilles heels. The first one is the politics of nudging. Halpern and Mason (2015) assume that nudges are apolitical, or political uncontentious, because they are optimizations of policy implementation design that are neutral to political goals. While Bersch (2019) and Mangla (2018) also analyze bureaucratic (or “technocratic”) reform actors, they both conceive these actors as politically astute and consciously maneuvering the (bureaucratic) politics of policymaking. Hence policy choices and their evaluation by actors in the government engine room are not free from political tactics.

Second, the mostly implicit model of governance of behavioral insights is one of delegating policy design powers to a set of experts—experts who are often not embedded in the policy domain for which a policy trial is designed, but working in cross-cutting units. Delegating the task of analysis to individual (or a small group of) policy analysts was one of the key critiques of the rational model by Lindblom (1959). As anyone, such experts (or group of experts) are subject to bounded rationality, and therefore their capacity to assess policies from multiple perspectives remains limited (cf. Lodge and Wegrich, 2016).

One might add that empirical evidence from the developing world shows that the increasing use of policy trials comes with a focus on ever-smaller interventions, that is, those that can be easily implemented and to which experimental designs can be set up (de Souza Leão and Eyal, 2020). The empirical test for the model of radical incrementalism is whether policy bureaucrats in government engine rooms actually use the method for incrementally improving their policies.

TACTICAL INCREMENTALISM

Radical incrementalism is essentially a concept that seeks to carve out an area of apolitical policymaking, which supposedly provides the ideal ground for a more rational form of incrementalism, using policy trials. In contrast, tactical incrementalism seeks to use incrementalism for changing the politics of policymaking. Examples include pilot projects and other forms of “soft experimentation” that seek to demonstrate the usefulness of a policy on a small scale before expanding it. Such experiments have developed into a deliberately political tactic in the context of urban development, and the notion of “tactical incrementalism” is derived from “tactical urbanism” (Lyon and Garcia, 2015).

Around the beginning of the 2010s, the idea of changing cities by way of very small-scale changes to the urban space gained traction. Such “street experiments” (Bertolini 2020) range from pop-up parks, temporary closures of streets for car traffic, and urban gardening, and often aim at initiating more comprehensive changes in urban mobility policy. The concept of “tactical urbanism” (Lyon and Garcia, 2015) has been derived from these diverse activities. What distinguishes tactical urbanism from any kind of improvised activity playing with urban space is the idea to use small-scale and rapid changes to engage citizens and users—and mobilize demand and support for further, more far-reaching changes. Tactical urbanism has been used by activists but also by city governments to test changes and interventions—and to generate support for more change.

Tactical urbanism is, as mentioned earlier, a variation of the good old “pilot project” to test new interventions and policy changes, evaluate their effects, and decide about scaling up on the basis of impact evaluations (Kelly and Rocco, 2019). The recent literature on experimental policymaking considers such kind of “experiments” as “generative experimentalism” (Ansell and Bartenberger, 2016)—economists, and more recently behavioral public administration scholars will possibly flinch at the use of the E-word for such soft

forms of testing—because their aim is to develop new policy or institutional solutions by testing them on a smaller scale. Also “regulatory sandboxes,” in which companies can apply for regulatory exemption to test new business models, bear a strong resemblance to generative experimentalism, and by extension tactical incrementalism.

One key element of generative experimentalism, which Ansell and Bartenberger (2016) stress, is “political learning.” Ansell and Bartenberger (2016) define political learning as the updating of political preferences, and generative experiments are designed to allow and facilitate such updating of preferences. This element is particularly pronounced in the case of tactical urbanism, where the experience of citizens and users, for example of a road closed for traffic, or new pop-up bikes lanes set up during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, generates the political support for further measures (cf. Bertolini 2020, on “transition experiments” in urban mobility policy).

Tactical urbanism can be seen as a domain-specific variant of tactical incrementalism, which is defined as incremental policy changes that are designed to change the politics of policymaking. In other words, incremental policy changes at t_1 are introduced in order to generate support for—and reduce resistance against—policies that are planned to be introduced at t_2 . The implications for political time of this type of incrementalism are interesting: the incremental approach, relying on small-scale changes, might turn out to generate more comprehensive changes in a shorter time than by way of developing and implementing comprehensive reform plans. While actors pursue small-scale changes in short time, they in effect follow a more long-term strategy; that is, they have a longer time horizon but use quickly achieved small-scale changes to increase their chances for achieving longer-term goals.

Tactical incrementalism links back to Bersch’s “problem solving.” In her comparative analysis, it is the absence of policy reversals that generate more lasting and substantial changes—the proverbial turtle plodding along (Hood and Lodge, 2005). Bersch shows how successful reforms spread from one agency toward a larger set of agencies in the Brazilian government—but mostly under the radar of open politics and with a conflict avoidance strategy. But tactical incrementalism adds a different perspective, namely that small-scale and incremental measures can be used to change the political forces of demand and support for a particular policy (that would not have been generated without visibly implementing a small-scale change). How far this approach can travel from an urban space to other policy domains is one of the items of a future research agenda linking incrementalism to issues of political time.

CONCLUSIONS: INCREMENTALISM, POLITICS, AND TIME

This chapter has introduced the classic concept of incrementalism as an analytical approach and a reform concept of policymaking. It has explored the evolution of

incrementalism in light of critique raised and alternative models proposed, with an emphasis on the reform concept. The implication of incrementalism for political time is seemingly straightforward: incrementalism favors small changes and piecemeal policy changes, and therefore can only achieve larger change as a result of successive small steps. Hence, incremental change equals slow change. However, this chapter has argued that this characterization does not hold when including variations of incrementalism that developed in the twenty-first century.

Debates have centered on descriptive accuracy and normative appropriateness of incrementalism as slow change. Concerning the descriptive or analytical value, critical appraisals have integrated incrementalism in a broader theoretical framework that explains both periods of stability and the eruption of sudden changes. But these approaches also met countercritique, criticizing the oversight of developments of accumulated change by incremental ways, and recasting the role of incrementalism in generating fundamental institutional change. Concerning incrementalism as a reform concept, the late 2010s also saw a revival of incrementalist arguments—stressing the unintended effects of the countermodel, comprehensive reform strategies. According to that argument, incremental reform strategies actually “save time” by avoiding failures on a policy level and inducements of countermobilization and resistance during implementation at the political level. Actors pursuing incremental reforms actually have a more long-term time horizon than those seeking to achieve comprehensive reforms (in short time). These arguments, and counterarguments, related to incrementalism are still very much in line with the classic conception of incrementalism.

At the same time, classic incrementalism as a reform concept has also evolved. On the one hand, attempts to rationalize incremental policymaking by way of systematic use of experiments seeks to address the evaluation problem of incrementalism, that is, the difficulty of establishing the effects of a policy intervention, even if it presents a small change of the status quo, in the absence of a counterfactual. On the other hand, the irony of “radical incrementalism,” and its claim to rationalize policymaking in the engine room, is that it ignores the critique voiced against the earlier wave of experimental policymaking in the 1960/1970s. Moreover, it assigns incrementalism a technocratic and apolitical role that not only contradicts cumulative research about the political logic of bureaucratic policymaking (cf. Bach and Wegrich, 2020). It also takes away a key strength of the original concept of incrementalism, namely the role of mutual adjustment of a range of partisan policymakers. As to the time horizon of actors in the bureaucratic engine room, radical incrementalism is ambivalent. On the one hand, individual policy changes are cast as separate steps without a longer-term strategy. On the other hand, learning should take place by routinizing experimentation, that is, in an over-time process.

A second twenty-first-century variation of incrementalism as a reform concept has, potentially, more far-reaching implications for the politics of time. Tactical incrementalism, the tactical use of small-scale and often improvised policy changes on an experimental (in a nontechnical sense) basis, can lead to rapid achievement of desired change—by changing demand and support for this policy. Small-scale experimental changes are not only (and not even primarily) used to demonstrate the effectiveness

of this innovation. Instead, the aim is to generate and mobilize support for a scaled-up version of this policy idea. In other words, tactical incrementalism is a political reform strategy that might turn the received wisdom of incremental versus comprehensive reforms upside down: incremental change can be both faster and more far-reaching. And incrementalism does not necessarily equal subsidence to existing power structures, but it can be part of a strategy transforming them. Actors pursue short-term and small-scale initiatives to achieve large-scale change; that is, they act under a long-term time horizon.

Table 13.1: Politics of Time in Variations of Incrementalism

	Disjointed Incrementalism	Radical Incrementalism	Tactical Incrementalism	Comprehensive Reform
Sequence (what happens in which order)	Not specified, things happen simultaneously	Sequence of separate small-scale changes	Small-scale changes at the beginning of larger change processes	Major change at the outset of change, followed by implementation and adaptations
Speed (how fast)	Slow	High	High, initially	High
Duration (for how long)	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	Big bang
Time budgets	Short	Short	Short	Short
Time horizons	Short to medium	Medium	Medium to long	Short

Embedding research on the politics of policy change and institutional reform in perspectives of the politics of time has the potential to advance these debates substantially—and evolving understandings of incrementalism can, in turn, make valuable contributions toward debates about the politics of time. The account also shows the variation of the politics of time across different approaches to incrementalism as a reform concept. As Table 13.1 shows, these differences are not limited to the speed of change but also include the time horizon of actors. Future research should seek to further develop the concept of tactical incrementalism, explore empirically its value in different policy areas, and analyze its logic and boundary conditions. “Radical incrementalism” should be taken at face value by exploring empirically in how far the model has been taken up in the practice of engine room policymaking. Case studies charting the change of policymaking in government departments that started to use randomized experiments already in 2010 are still missing. Finally, future research should also be more critical of the claim that incrementalism driven by bureaucratic experts in ministries and agencies always equalized “problem solving.” Empirical examples of failed incremental reforms are hard to overlook, for example in public management reforms in Germany (Wegrich, 2020). Such research should explore when individual incremental reforms fail and when they remain isolated successes, that is, do not spread beyond individual organizational units.

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CHAPTER 14

TIME, SUSTAINABILITY, AND PUBLIC POLICY

HOLGER STRAßHEIM

SUSTAINABILITY is a matter of time. The temporal dimension is encapsulated in the prominent definition of sustainability by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) as a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, 43). Ever since the WCED located all efforts to achieve sustainability in the temporal horizons of present and future, the sensitivity to time and its relevance for policymaking and governing has grown significantly. In the UN’s *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, efforts to translate a deeper understanding of time and temporality into practices of bringing about sustainable transformation are clearly recognizable (United Nations, 2019). This includes the definition of six “entry points of transformation” as critical junctures for more systemic sustainability strategies or the recommendation to establish inter- and transdisciplinary methods for a collective exploration of future trajectories (United Nations, 2019, xxii–xxxiii, 111–116). Time is now a *topos sui generis* in studies of sustainability (for an overview, see Knappe, et al. 2019; Aykut, Demortain, and Benbouzid, 2020).

In earlier studies of sustainability, time mostly appeared as an implicit dimension of closely related concepts such as “intergenerational justice” (Burger and Christen, 2011), “transition management” (Kemp, Loorbach, and Rotmans, 2007), “sustainability impact assessment” (Adelle and Weiland, 2013) or “sustainable development” (Meadowcroft, 2000). The political popularization and contestation of these and other ideas can be seen as both a driver and a result of the growing sensitivity for time across science and society. An orientation toward the future seems to be imperative whenever sustainability is interpreted as the basic norm of an intergenerational contract that conserves a “finite planet” for those to follow (Jackson, 2011). The present is an object of scientific and political attention in approaches that search for ways of transforming current developments by defining indicators of creating a global sustainable order (Miller, 2005, 2004). Finally,

in criticizing the locked-in pathways of carbon society or in idealizing natural heritage, sustainability is also about the past (Unruh, 2000; Auclair and Fairclough, 2015).

More recently, however, time has become the explicit object of research on sustainability and of related debates on climate governance under the conditions of the Anthropocene (Galaz, 2019). Current discussions tend to emphasize the relationship between time and political action in diverse ways (Straßheim, 2016; Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019; Straßheim and Ulbricht, 2015). There are at least three main strains of research that articulate this increasing awareness of the temporal dimension.

First, some scholars are analyzing the multiple ways public policy and governance are embedded in timetables, procedural rhythms, paces, sequences, and critical junctures, such as the previously mentioned “entry points” that influence short-term and long-term strategies (Schedler and Santiso, 1998). Research on the legacy of institutional traditions and path dependency hints at structural “lock-ins” that need to be avoided in policy areas such as energy or climate (Pierson, 2004; Unruh, 2000). Timing, sequencing, speed, and duration of processes in parliaments, policy arenas, or multilevel governance constellations are conceptualized as resources and restraints for decision-making and coordination (Scheuerman, 2001; Rosa, 2015). The literature on these temporal structures in which policymaking and governance operate underscores the importance of these insights for achieving “temporal autonomy” (Geiger et al., 2020). All in all, these studies focus on *policymaking in time*.

A second, related, perspective takes these insights further by identifying modes of *policymaking by time*. Political action that relies on governing by time operates in the mode of temporal manipulation (Palonen, 2008; Zahariadis, 2003, 2015). Problems are presented as being urgent. Strategies rely on “salami tactics” to introduce a sequential rhythm and a desired timing. Deadlines become “political devices” that help to enforce action and, at the same time, create obstacles for opposing voices and the communication of concerns (Zahariadis, 2015). In contrast to the first type of studies focusing on the structural embeddedness of political action in temporal structures, this research strain tends to emphasize that decision-making is less determined by structures and rather contingent upon the “temporal sorting” of a complex stream of problems, solutions, and interests (Kingdon, 1984; Simon, 1982; Zohlnhöfer, Herweg, and Rüb, 2015).

A third and relatively recent group of studies is inspired by theories of knowledge, culture, and practice. These studies maintain that time and temporality are themselves socially produced and reproduced. *Policymaking of time* creates temporal orders that vary across sociopolitical and cultural constellations. “Fictional expectations” and “imaginaries” about a future state of the world take the form of narratives and stories that motivate action and become self-fulfilling prophecies (Beckert, 2016; Jasanoff, 2015). They function as temporal “lenses” that order events in the past, define the causes and effects of actions in the present, and delineate the range of imaginable and acceptable futures (Andersson and Rindzeviciute, 2015). Over time, these semantics and meanings of sustainability may turn into highly objectified, shared orders of temporal sense-making that shape the horizons of political action (Howlett and Goetz, 2014; Skowronek, 2008).

This chapter explores the relationship between sustainability and time by building on these three strains of research. It is argued that politics and policymaking *in time*, *by time*, and *of time* represents three basic temporal modalities. Temporal modalities are stylized configurations of how elements of time-related sense-making—the ways of how we “deal” with time (Pomian, 2013)—are linked to each other through social action and communication. Elements of time-related sense-making include temporal horizons of past, present, and future; temporal schemes such as “clock time” and calendars; process time that is experienced as a flow of events; and temporal semantics such as concepts or narratives of time (Elias, 1984; Schütz, 1959; Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Reinecke and Ansari, 2017; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In policymaking, these elements are interwoven and, over time, become institutions. Once they are introduced, election dates and cycles are both practical and symbolic aspects of the time limits of democratic governments. The procedures and timelines underlying elections can be turned into instruments of political strategizing. And by metaphorically relating these political strategies to the time horizons of past and future, temporalized concepts such as progress or conservatism emerge and develop a semantic history of their own (on temporalized concepts, see Koselleck, 2004). Policymaking as “projective activity” (Palonen, 2006, 24) *in time*, *by time*, and *of time* is confronted with, creates, and changes temporal orders of institutions and meanings.

The core assumption of this article is that sustainability is such a temporalized concept and that the political and normative aspirations associated with it depend on these three temporal modalities. The many meanings of sustainability are the result of policymaking *in time*, *by time*, and *of time*. Depending on the specific configuration, the dominance of one or more modalities, their relationship to each other, and their interlinkage, sustainability is interpreted and enacted in very different ways. Different “temporal orders” of sustainability emerge (Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019). Sustainability may be based on an openness to unprecedented change and on creative reimaginings of the future (Andersson and Rindzeviciute, 2015; Simon, 2019). It could be a pledge to express historical experience, to preserve heritage and build bridges between generations (Auclair and Fairclough, 2015). It may, however, also be tied to the “treadmill” of indicators and assessment procedures that are supposed to safeguard the present from an increasingly threatening future (Hartog, 2015, xv; Gumbrecht, 2014). Hence, exploring temporal modalities in policymaking and governance may help to get a better understanding of the future(s) of sustainability. The purpose of this exercise is not a forecast but rather the development of an analytical framework that grasps the political contingencies and conflicts resulting from the multiple temporal expressions of sustainability as an “essentially contested concept” (Gallie, 1955–1956; Jacobs, 1999).

The chapter is structured as follows: In the next section, the three temporal modalities are distinguished and their interlinkage is discussed on a more abstract, conceptual level. The third section applies the concept of temporal modalities to sustainability and illustrates the findings by giving examples from policymaking and governance. Based on this, the last section discusses the consequences in light of current studies on the plural and contested futures of sustainability (Wenzel et al., 2020; Adloff and Neckel, 2019;

Hartog, 2015; Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019) and “post-sustainability” (Blühdorn, 2016). The findings are summarized and conclusions are drawn for further research.

TEMPORAL MODALITIES OF POLITICS AND POLICYMAKING

Max Weber was among the first to reflect upon the temporal dimensions of politics and policymaking (Palonen, 1998, 2003, 2006). According to him, politics is closely connected to power, defined as “any chance to carry through one’s own will even against resistance, no matter whereon this chance is based” (Weber, [1922] 1980, 38; for a careful translation, see Wallimann, Tatsis, and Zito, 1977, 234). The notion of chance can be found all across Weber’s works (Palonen, 2011). He is well aware of the temporal restrictions, possibilities, opportunities, and contingencies in which politics is embedded.

As Palonen has shown in his seminal analysis of the “Weberian moment,” however, Weber goes even beyond this understanding of political action as embedded in time. He suggests that temporal opportunities and contingencies themselves can be formed and changed through political action (Palonen, 2011, 115; 1998). Politics as the “pursuit for a portion of power, or for influencing the division of power” (Weber, [1919] 2015) is an action that strives for the transformation of its very own conditions. Time can be turned into a resource for changing existing chances and creating new ones (Palonen, 2003, 173). From this view, politics may primarily be understood as an action that aims at creating new chances and opportunities or tries to influence the chances for others (Palonen, 1998). The metaphor of the “strong drilling through hard boards” (Weber, [1919] 2015) interlinks the aspect of temporal embeddedness and the aspect of opening up possibilities.

When Weber argues that political action is not only tied to the “possible” but also reaches “for the impossible” (Weber, [1919] 2015), he even adds a further dimension. While he insists that politics need a “sense of judgment” to be anchored firmly in the present, he also implies that the horizons of time and the political expectations toward the future might become the object of the transformative power of politics. Policymaking is a political activity that appraises both the present situation and past experiences in light of desirable futures. It can be seen as a subtype of politics that specifically deals with time horizons in an evaluative way (Palonen, 2003, 175–177).

All in all, it seems that the Weberian perspective already alludes to the three temporal modalities of politics *in time*, *by time*, and *of time* (for a typology of political action based on time and temporality, see Palonen, 2003). With differences in emphasis and focus, current research on time and politics is now more explicitly discussing the differences in temporal modalities (Reinecke and Ansari, 2017; Howlett and Goetz, 2014; Straßheim, 2016; Hirschman, 2020; Wenzel et al., 2020; Palonen, 2014).

Policymaking in Time

A first group of studies is mainly concerned with *policymaking in time*; that is, the multiple ways of how politics are structured by time as an independent variable. Timetables, events, and procedural sequences do not only provide chronometrical and chronological orientation. More importantly, they are institutional and cultural frames of reference that enable and restrain the synchronization and coordination of political actions (Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Reinecke and Ansari, 2017). Research on time and democracy has made this very clear: “time and timing are . . . the essence of the democratic process” (Linz, 1998, 34). Presidential and parliamentary systems can be systematically distinguished by their temporal structure, by “the timetables of democratic politics, its time budgets, its point of initiation and termination, its pace, its sequences, and its cycles” (Schedler and Santiso, 1998, 8). Mandates, terms, tenures, and time budgets of government, the rhythms of legislations, and the deadlines of political procedures all seem to significantly determine the character of democratic government (Palonen, 2014; Skowronek, 2008). Autocracies, in contrast, tend to operate in a mode of timelessness (Lechner, 1995; Wright, 2008).

Theories of path dependency emphasize the role of self-enforcing mechanisms that may lead to a “lock-in” of policymaking on a specific trajectory. Even if the institutional path is increasingly seen as suboptimal, it cannot be easily left without high costs, loss of legitimacy, or a rapid increase in uncertainty (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney, 2000; Scoones and Stirling, 2020). Only if a “critical juncture” is reached, actors may have a chance to change existing institutions and open up alternative pathways (Ebbinghaus, 2005; Djelic and Quack, 2005). These moments of contingency have been highlighted in process models identifying mechanisms of positive and negative feedbacks that can explain why, at some point, societal trajectories take a completely different direction (Baumgartner and Jones 2002; Gersick, 1991).

Policymaking by Time

A related perspective accentuates the possibilities of using time as a resource. *Policymaking by time* relies on the “manipulation” of temporal structures (Palonen, 2008; Zahariadis, 2003, 14–16; 2015; Zohlnhöfer, Herweg, and Rüb, 2015; Kingdon, 1984). In accordance with Weber, policymaking is characterized by creating and rearranging opportunities. Preferences, solutions, and problems are not always well sorted. Issues are complex and politically contestable. Decision-making is situational. Problems and solutions are sometimes disconnected from each other due to the multilevel character of governing. Political actors have to operate under the conditions of “ambiguity,” defined as “problematic preferences and unclear information about means and ends” (Zohlnhöfer, Herweg, and Rüb, 2015, 412).

Time is scarce and so is attention. Often, choices are made not on a rational basis but as situational selection. This strategy of “temporal sorting” sometimes reverses the logic of problem-solving: actors are chasing problems that justify an ideologically preferred solution (Kingdon, 1984). Practices such as relentless twittering to raise awareness, “salami tactics” to slow down decisions, or the sudden acceleration of procedures become instruments in a political struggle about time. Limiting time horizons changes the temporal rhythm of the policy process. Deadlines are not politically neutral. Instead, they are “political devices” that change the long-term orientation of policymakers and their capability to reflect upon the consequences of their actions (Zahariadis, 2015). Deadlines may reduce political conflicts and facilitate a more innovative policy style. They may, however, also help to exclude certain actors and weaken democratic procedures (Zahariadis, 2015).

Policymaking of Time

A third perspective, *policymaking of time*, is inspired by theories of knowledge, culture, and practice (Reinecke and Ansari, 2017; Straßheim, 2016; Hirschman, 2020; Wenzel et al., 2020; Felt et al., 2014; Andersson and Rindzeviciute, 2015). The social construction of time transcends the calculative measurements derived from clock time or calendars. It manifests itself in culturally variable understandings of societies as cyclical or linear, as determined by a certain “telos” or by revolutionary moments (Adam, 2004). These temporal orders are not given. They are not independent from political actions and may vary across social and cultural constellations. Once stabilized, they work as social “filters” and “lenses” (Felt et al., 2014). Produced and reproduced in political, economic, or scientific interactions, they help actors to order events, to describe causalities by distinguishing between causes and effects, to experience surprises against a background of routines and regularities, and to develop complex descriptions of the past and the future. Temporal orders can be transformed by “fictional expectations” about a future state of the world that may finally turn into self-fulfilling prophecies (Beckert, 2016).

Analyzing policy in terms of temporal orders requires exploring multiple frames of experiencing and enacting time. The result is not a single trajectory but, as Koselleck has pointed out, following the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, “many forms of time superimposed one upon the other” (Koselleck, 2004, 2). Research following this line of inquiry asks for the multiple ways these temporal orders are constituted, maintained, and changed. Politics and time are mutually intertwined: “This also highlights the political role time plays in debates and justifications of technoscientific and societal choices, in the proclamation of urgent problems but also in requests for citizens’ compliance with certain decisions—always in the name of a specific future that has to be achieved” (Felt et al., 2014, 5). Time is not based on chronometrics or chronologies but on “chronosophies” (Pomian, 2013), or collectively shared beliefs and ways of sense-making such as myths or ideologies that have consequences for the temporal coordination of societies.

These three perspectives on politics and policymaking—*in time*, *by time*, and *of time*—approach their object from different angles and ascribe to it different characters. It could be argued that they deal with the same object while only illuminating various facets. In fact, Koselleck has shown that, beginning in the 18th century, the growing awareness of politics as a time-related and time-bound phenomenon resulted in a “temporalization” of both political practices and concepts (Koselleck, 2004; Palonen, 2006). Koselleck uses the opposition of “history in time” and “history by means of time” to highlight the practical consequences of temporalization. This led to a gradual shift from the passive experience of time as determined by religious or astronomic chronologies to more active modes of “turning time itself into a political instrument” in contexts such as parliamentary procedures (Palonen, 2006, 18; 2014). On a conceptual level, temporalization enhanced the reinterpretation of spatial metaphors, semantics, or narratives such as “progress” (*Fortschritt*) into temporal ones (Meier and Koselleck, 1975). It seems that in modern societies, a time-sensitive terminology emerges, a rich stock of concepts and counter-concepts (“progressive” versus “conservative”) that open up new possibilities for experiencing and using time in social relations, sometimes even to the extreme of an “obsession with temporality” (Koselleck, 2004, 250).

Temporalized concepts such as progress are not “mere” semantics. By being incorporated into political practices, they may develop a discursive history of their own that forms the basis for long-term strategies of justification and contestation. They may be integrated into the interpretation of both historical time and biographical time, and thus influence collective as well as individual identities and expectations. And they may be accepted as more or less unquestioned understandings that align political and epistemic positions, delineate them against alternatives, and provide distinctions between what is relevant and what can be ignored. Progress as a temporal concept with its micro- and macropolitical dynamics of separating “advanced” societies from those societies that needed to “develop” is a case in point (Wagner, 2016). Of course, the concept of progress, with its more recent history, also shows that once taken-for-granted semantics can slowly be challenged through “institutional work” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) and the critical reimagination of political orders (Jasanoff, 2015).

Hence, politics and policymaking *in time*, *by time*, and *of time* represent three distinctive temporal modalities in this process of changing and stabilizing temporal orders on the practical and conceptual level. Temporal modalities are particular configurations of how elements of time-related sense-making—the ways of how we “deal” with time (Pomian, 2013)—are linked to each other through social action and communication. Such elements of time-related social sense-making include temporal *schemes* such as “clock time” and calendars (chronometric elements); process time that is experienced as the flow of *events* (chronographic elements); temporal *horizons* of past, present, and future (chronologic elements); and temporal semantics that carry certain meanings of time and temporality (chronosophic elements) (Elias, 1984; Schütz, 1959; Sorokin and Merton, 1937; Reinecke and Ansari, 2017; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Pomian, 2013). In policymaking, these elements are interwoven, objectified, and, over time, transformed.

Understood by many as a counter-concept to progress and its implicit notions of growth, sustainability has already developed a semantic history of its own. It carries multiple meanings and is related to very specific temporal modalities. The next section focuses on these temporal modalities of sustainability policies and governance.

TEMPORAL MODALITIES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability as a time-related idea of dealing with multiple problems ranging from acid rain to complex socioecological dynamics has become widely prominent (Adger and Jordan, 2009; Blühdorn, 2016; Biermann, 2020). Its long “conceptual evolution” originates in forest management (Meadowcroft, 2000, 2017). Ever since the Brundtland Report from 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), however, it became a relevant concept across multiple policies, was introduced into diverse policy debates, and was taken up by an increasingly large group of actors. This was also the starting point for a widening repertoire of derivative concepts such as “sustainable development,” “sustainable business,” or “sustainability governance” (Meadowcroft, 2017). Environmental groups, expert panels, business organizations, ministries, and agencies started to refer to it; it was incorporated into policy programs, political agendas, and white papers; and its meaning and implications have become the object of judicial interpretations. As research on semantic evaluation has shown, this gradual shift from a “softer” idea to “harder” legalistic and political manifestations is a sign of further institutional and cultural embedding of a once marginal concept (Meadowcroft and Fiorino, 2017, 9). At the same time, older concepts that belong to the same conceptual field and are institutionalized to a similar depth are sometimes incorporated by the new concepts because of their semantic potential. Sustainability slowly supersedes the still widely established notion of “environment” or “environmentalism.” For many, environmentalism as a concept is perceived as being semantically unable to grasp the complex temporal dynamics and long-term implications of those dynamics that are connecting natural and social relations (Biermann, 2020; Adger and Jordan, 2009). More than ten years ago, O’Riordan argued that the strength of the concept of sustainability lies in its capability to capture economic, social, and political transformations in an all-encompassing way: “Environmentalism is morphing into sustainability” (O’Riordan, 2009, 313). Sustainability and other “connective concepts” (Simon, 2020) such as the Anthropocene seem to frame the climate crisis and other challenges in a multitemporal way that overcomes the spatial thinking in terms of a “human-environment dichotomy” and highlights the dynamics of global entanglements: “All this adds a ‘deep time perspective’ to both past and future that the more static frame of the ‘environmental policy’ paradigm cannot capture” (Biermann, 2020, 5). Sustainability is itself the result of a relatively recent temporalization of ecology-related concepts (Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019; Simon, 2020). It unfolds this potential in all three of the temporal modalities of policymaking and governing.

Sustainability Policy in Deep Time

Probably the most prominent observation in this context is that of “deep time” (Galaz, 2019). In the context of sustainability, the notion of “deep time” shifts the attention to long-term trajectories of the earth system as a dynamic system that is composed of biosphere, climate, and societies (Steffen et al., 2018). Deep time refers to the observations of human impacts on planetary processes and the shift from the Holocene to the recently proposed geological epoch of Anthropocene, in which the states of the Earth systems are profoundly altered by human actions and, in turn, impact the living conditions of societies. These human-driven dynamics could trigger thresholds, nonlinear processes, and “tipping points,” which then might shift the pathways of planetary climate in a relatively short span of time for “tens to hundreds of thousands of years” (Steffen et al., 2018, 8253).

From a policy and governance perspective, the problem of deep time is not so much the calculation of geological timescales or the correct definition of the epoch of the Anthropocene, although these debates carry some far-reaching political implications as well (Zalasiewicz, 2015; Steffen, Leinfelder, and Zalasiewicz, 2016). More important is the relationship and interplay between “deep time” and “political time”—i.e., between the trajectories of the Earth system and the temporal modalities of political action (Galaz, 2019, 112; Howlett and Goetz, 2014). Such modalities of sustainability policy *in time* concern “the complex and implicit political dimensions embedded in the timing of the Anthropocene” (Galaz, 2019, 110). The timescales of policymaking and the evolution of government systems and institutions interfere with climate trajectories in such ways that decisions and policies over a few decades may cause profound deep-time shifts. Electoral cycles that span a few years or governance constellations that might be stable for a few decades can trigger “tipping cascades” that push the global average temperature higher and accelerate further amplification of temperature rise in timescales of centuries (Steffen et al., 2018, 8255). Such a cascade of deep-time effects is highly relevant in cases such as polar geopolitics that might affect the stability of the Greenland Ice Sheet and, as a consequence, shift the temperature balance of the Atlantic Ocean circulation for centuries (Steffen et al., 2018; Powell and Dodds, 2014).

Some argue that this “temporal asymmetry between political and geological timescales” is one of the grand challenges for sustainability policy in the Anthropocene (Galaz, 2019, 114; Rockström et al., 2016; Reid et al., 2010). It is a challenge for both science and politics, as it points to the necessity to comprehend “time inconsistencies” between the temperature behavior of the climate system and the pace of institutional transformations, technological innovations, and policy decisions. Time inconsistencies could be a particular problem for geoengineering such as solar radiation management (Galaz, 2019, 114–115; Beck and Mahoney, 2018). These interventions that still represent “more speculative technological futures” (Beck and Mahoney, 2018, 7) are not yet available at the scale proposed by some of their advocates. Their success depends on a deep understanding of the entanglements between the conditions for maintaining social and political support for such solutions and the complex biogeophysical feedback

dynamics, nonlinear effects, and other large-scale discontinuities of global climate (Steffen et al., 2018, 8256).

A further complication of sustainability policy in deep time is posed by dynamics of acceleration, “ultra-speed,” and desynchronization in societies (Galaz, 2019, 119–120; Rosa, 2015; Scheuerman, 2001). To be sure, phenomena of acceleration have been described ever since the 19th century in the contexts of an intensified interaction across national boundaries and a widening of world horizons (Osterhammel, 2015). The core assumption of research on acceleration, however, is that “the acceleration that is a constitutive part of modernity crosses a critical threshold in “late modernity” beyond which the demand for societal desynchronization and integration can no longer be met” (Rosa, 2015, 20). Information flows in financial markets and other forms of algorithmic action can hardly be met by human information-processing capacities. Transactions in the global context are outpacing political or regulatory interventions. Marginalized individuals and collectives are excluded from some or all forms of growth. These worldwide economic, political, and social asymmetries in acceleration only deepen the time inconsistencies that already characterize the entanglements of human and biogeophysical factors. Sustainability policy and governance is dealing with dynamics transgressing the social and geological timescales of the earth system. The once unquestioned certainties about the separation between geological time and political time are now shattered. They need to be replaced by different modes of deep-time synchronization. That is probably one of the core insights for politics embedded in “Anthropocene time” (Chakrabarty, 2018).

Time as a Resource for Sustainability

To cope with the challenges of the Anthropocene, initiatives at the interface of science and politics such as Future Earth or the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) urge that “transformative structural change” is needed to both understand and manage complex human-induced dynamics (Biermann et al. 2012; Esguerra and van der Hel, 2021). As a precondition of “swift transformative progress,” these platforms suggest a more flexible design of international treaties through majority voting in climate-related areas, an architecture of multilateral harmonized institutions to resynchronize financial regimes and sustainable developments, a strengthening of international sustainability organizations such as the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and further measures in the context of transnational mechanisms of accountability, legitimacy, equity, and global adaptation (Biermann et al., 2012). Future Earth, a participatory global research platform launched in 2012, includes in its Governing Council representatives from key actors in global sustainability governance and expertise. Its “holistic strategy on Earth system research” forms the basis for three key themes that target the temporal challenges of the Anthropocene: dynamic planet, global development, and transformations toward sustainability (Esguerra and van der Hel, 2021, 141).

Strategies of developing sustainability *by time* are manifold. The 1.5 degrees Celsius limit and the establishment of emission budgets are ways of creating temporal scarcity and pressure for action (Shaw, 2017). NGOs, social movements, and the media aim at increasing the salience of climate issues to open up opportunity windows that can be used by policy entrepreneurs to shift priorities on political agendas (Pralle, 2009). Probably one of the latest expressions of strategies using time and temporality as a resource is the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, which perceives the world of the 21st century as being marked by complex trade-offs between the sectorial, spatial, and temporal dimensions (United Nations, 2019, 5). The report explicitly addresses the interlinkages between social and natural dynamics and the temporal challenges of sustainability policy in the Anthropocene. It maps different types of sustainability challenges, ranging from linear cause-effect relations that can be approached with relatively high certainty to “wicked” and “chaotic” constellations marked by contested knowledge, ecological tipping points, and deep socioecological uncertainties (112). These spheres of high uncertainty can be found at the “nexus” where combined sustainability challenges transcend the boundaries between disciplines, sectors, and policy areas and force multiple actors to search for cross-border constellations of cooperation and expertise. Anthropogenic climate change impacts multiple social and environmental determinants of health, affects the most vulnerable populations, and exacerbates the correlations between multiple health risks. At the same time, the mitigation of climate change depends on systems of renewable energy supply, the decrease of highly polluting forms of mobility, and a global transformation of the transport sector. The uncertainties at the nexus are not only related to the ways to understand and address these challenges; they also concern the very interpretation of the nexus itself, as well as its shape and its normative implications (Scoones and Stirling, 2020; Zelli et al., 2020; Straßheim and Canzler, 2019).

The UN report urges researchers and policy actors to resist the pressure to produce quick results or simple interventions. Instead, it suggests that they “harness important synergies, multiplier effects and trade-offs across several goals so as to accelerate progress” (United Nations, 2019, 4). Uncertainty is seen as a resource for building up a socially and scientifically more robust knowledge that is aware of diverse norms, aspirations, and preferences. Disagreement, doubt, and pluralism function as incentives to explore multiple options. Instead of focusing on certain and consensual grounds, uncertainty and dissonance become assets (Esposito, 2017; Stark, 2009). Building on these insights about uncertainty, the core concept of six “entry points of transformation” is introduced (United Nations, 2019, xxii–xxiii). Entry points are presented as opportunity windows in complex contexts that lead to sustainable trajectories and pathways. They resemble what O’Riordan (2009) once described as “positive tipping points”—critical moments at which sustainable pathways could be created leading to systemic interactions and cascade effects across multiple “levers” of governance, economy, individual and collective action, science, and technology. The idea of entry points is not completely new. It has its own semantic tradition as a temporal subconcept of sustainability that is supposed to shift policymaking and research away from linear models of acting in time to more

proactive ways of targeting, for instance, the various links between biodiversity, ecosystem deterioration, and inequality (United Nations, 2019, xxiii). It has already inspired fruitful research on spatiotemporal dynamics across multiple Sustainable Development Goals (Xu et al., 2020).

Apart from uncertainty, longevity is another resource for sustainability by time. Faced with deep-time interdependencies, the idea is to resynchronize multiple timescales by ensuring the long-term stability of sustainability policy. Political institutions and organizations are supposed to overcome their short-termism and last over long periods of time: “human influences on the trajectories of the planet need to be approached in a deep-time manner” (Hanusch and Biermann, 2020). For centuries to come, such “deep-time organizations” could ensure that residues of human activity such as nuclear waste or chemicals are recognized and managed in their consequences, that the diversity of ecosystems is enhanced beyond the usual horizons of environmental protection, and that human and earthly tipping points are in synch (Hanusch and Biermann, 2020, 20; Boudia et al., 2018).

As a recent study of the few existing deep-time organizations such as the world’s oldest bank (Sveriges Riksbank, founded 1668), the world’s oldest university (University of Al-Quaraouiyine, founded 859), or the world’s oldest publishing house (Cambridge University Press, founded 1534) shows, patterns of longevity are complex (Hanusch and Biermann 2020). Design principles include a safe location and elite support, connections to the state, involvement of the public, adaptability either by incorporating change or by being accepted as system-relevant, distribution of basic human needs and public recognition as a prototype of delivering change or stability (Hanusch and Biermann, 2020, 31–32). The authors argue that in terms of sustainability policy and governance, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault might be a good candidate for a deep-time organization. Deep-time organizations store longevity by design. They are, however, only one element of a governance architecture that requires “novel multi-temporal governance mechanisms and institutions” (Hanusch and Biermann, 2020, 35) to harness time for sustainable development.

Future-Making and the Politics of Anticipation

Finally, temporal modalities of sustainability also include practices of shaping and making time itself. The future has become a constantly moving target of sustainability policies (Aykut, Demortain, and Benbouzid, 2020; Biermann, 2020; Knappe et al., 2019; Granjou, Walker, and Salazar, 2017; Jasanoff, 2015; Löwbrand et al., 2015; Mathews and Barnes, 2016). When a certain future is predicted, modeled, or projected, it may become more credible and actionable, often by suppressing ideas about alternative futures. Making or unmaking futures is always in some ways connected to the past (e.g., when path dependency is invoked) and to the present (e.g., in cost-benefit calculations) (Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019). The future is the result of the ways the “space of experience” and the “horizon of expectations” are related to each other (Koselleck, 2004).

It emerges in a specific institutional, cultural, and political context in which the authority for making future-related claims is historically changing.

Time itself is an “ordering force” that is the object of policies (Felt et al., 2014, 4). The resulting temporal arrangements composed of multiple time frames, temporal rules, and procedures have been described as temporal orders or “timescapes” (Adam, 2004; Howlett and Goetz, 2014). Analyzing public policy in terms of temporal orders or timescapes requires investigating how multiple frames of experiencing and enacting time are embedded into discursive and institutional structures, leading to specific temporal features that determine the relevance and meaning of past, present, and future, and thus define the scope of collective action. Temporal orders vary depending on the level and context of policies (Meyer-Sahling and Goetz, 2009; Tucker, 2014).

Overlooking the vast and steadily growing literature on this temporal modality, there are multiple interrelated elements of sense-making that are highlighted by research on sustainability and the Anthropocene (Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019): “[f]ictional expectation” and “imaginaries” refer to collective, sociotechnical projections of a future state of social life and social order (Beckert, 2016; Jasanoff, 2015). As Beckert argues, action cannot only be explained by past occurrences. More importantly, “it is the future that shapes the present—or, to be more specific: it is the images of the future that shape present decisions” (Beckert, 2013, 221). In her analysis of imaginaries, Jasanoff emphasizes that these institutionalized and publicly performed projections also invoke a normative understanding that separates desirable futures from the less desirable ones. Basically, every social action can be distinguished from mere behavior by a constantly unfolding anticipation of a future in which the very act is already accomplished (Schütz, 1959). Both imaginaries and fictional expectations, however, always also produce sociotechnical representations of how the world should be. They provide projective temporal concepts. Some of them widen the horizon of expectations while others “colonize” (Giddens, 1995, 5) the future by invisibilizing alternatives and constructing necessities based on more reductive worldviews and values.

This also has very practical and concrete consequences. For example, the imaginary of socioecological transformation emphasizes the dynamic and open character of sustainability problems and implies that sustainable governance itself should be designed in a future-oriented and reflexive way in order to cope with uncertainties (Scoones and Stirling, 2020; Voss and Bornemann, 2011; Kemp, Loorbach, and Rotmans, 2007). Transition management aims at transcending the usual timeframe of policymaking by creating “transition arena” based on long-term “transition visions,” medium-term “transition paths,” and short-term “transition experiments” (Kemp, Loorbach, and Rotmans, 2007). The organizers of these arrangements are called upon to include innovative frontrunners whose thoughts and actions are supposed to overcome existing obstructions and open up transformative perspectives. By aligning collective decisions and actions with a sociotechnical time frame, such imaginaries more or less directly shape the temporal norms and ideas of the respective collective in a forward-looking way (Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019).

“Chronotechnologies” play an important role in shaping the future (Nowotny, 1994). Sustainability impact assessments, for example, aim at assessing the long-term effects of specific policies or projects and compare them with selected sustainability goals (Adelle and Weiland, 2013; Cashmore et al., 2010; Granjou, Walker, and Salazar, 2017). Foresights and other practices of “anticipatory expertise” are supposed to generate “evidence-based” knowledge of what will be the case in the future (Vecchione, 2012; Aykut, Demortain, and Benbouzid, 2020; Straßheim and Kettunen, 2014). In the representations of a factual future, fictional futures are forged as both less possible and less desirable (Andersson and Rindzeviciute, 2015). By implementing specific infrastructures, practices, and instruments of future-making, chronotechnologies subtly produce and reproduce some of the political assumptions of their architects (Aykut, Demortain, and Benbouzid, 2020).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been criticized for constituting desirable futures by rendering what is technologically possible and achievable on a global level (Beck and Mahoney, 2018; Anderson and Peters, 2016; Beck, 2015). Its reliance on negative emissions technologies, such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), that are not yet available at the necessary scale was met with skepticism due to the opacity of its implicit assumptions and questions concerning the feasibility (and desirability) of such technologies (Beck and Mahoney, 2018, 6). The IPCC included BECCS in the set of policy options based on new climate scenarios (“Representative Concentration Pathways”) that shifted the primary focus from social change to more technological pathways: “Technical feasibility and experimental reproducibility replaced social plausibility as the key criteria for formally sanctioning certain constructions of the future” (Beck and Mahoney, 2018, 7). Understanding how “knowing and governing environmental futures” (Granjou, Walker, and Salazar, 2017) changes and is being changed by both imaginaries and chronotechnologies may be critical for assessing the future of sustainability.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article has developed a three-dimensional view of the temporal concept of sustainability. It is based on the idea of temporal modalities, stylized configurations of how we make sense of time. Temporal horizons, temporal schemes, process-time, and temporal concepts are interwoven with each other in social action and communication. In practices of policymaking *in time*, *by time*, and *of time*, these elements are combined with each other, become institutionalized, and are reinterpreted and transformed.

The many temporal meanings of sustainability are the result of such policymaking *in time*, *by time*, and *of time*. Depending on the specific configuration, the dominance of one or more modalities and their interlinkage, sustainability is interpreted and enacted in very different ways. There are at least two different temporal orders or “imaginaries”

of sustainability: sustainability as “presentism,” on the one hand, and sustainability as transformative change, on the other (for different typologies, see Bornemann and Straßheim, 2019; Adloff and Neckel, 2019; Biermann, 2020).

In views of sustainability as presentism, existing forms of governance, policymaking, and consumer lifestyles are changed only to the degree that the “hegemonic eco-political frame” (Blühdorn, 2016, 1) can be adapted to the ecological crisis caused by previous structures. The “financialization” of sustainability resulting in multiple financial products such as “green bonds” means that visions of a sustainable future are always tied to the profit interests of the present (Adloff and Neckel 2019, 1018). In policymaking, chronotechnological instruments such as integrated assessment modeling or certain scenario techniques control the future by using present-day expertise and evidence. The past becomes a stream of data that is interpreted in light of the most up-to-date models and analytics. “Resilience,” understood as the capacity to absorb the multiple crises in the Anthropocene and preserve the presence by making it more adaptable, becomes imperative. Technologies such as carbon capture or solar radiation management are an expression of this imaginary. Genetic learning algorithms and machine learning models help to maximize production, assess fish stocks, support deep-sea mining, and other forms to cope with increasing acceleration (Galaz, 2019, 118). “Here we are dealing with imaginations of the future that are expertocratic, pervaded by technological ideas of control, and largely divorced from normative debates or democratic-deliberative procedures” (Adloff and Neckel, 2019, 1022).

In contrast, in temporal modalities of a transformative change, the reimagination of alternative futures becomes a central vantage point. In light of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch, assumptions about the relationship between culture and nature previously taken for granted are questioned (Lövbrand et al., 2015). The “climatic regime” (Aykut, 2016) that is suggested reframes the notion of controlling nature and searches for new constellations of governing between science, policy, and society (Fischer, 2017). Global platforms such as IPBES may open up the possibility to (re)define transformative change as “a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values” (IPBES, 2019; Beck and Forsyth, 2020). The robustness and authority of scientific evidence on key themes of transformation such as biodiversity need to be directly related to the particular views and visions that are included in the “co-production” of evidence and expertise (Beck and Forsyth, 2020; Jasanoff, 2004; Esguerra, Beck, and Lidskog, 2017). This can also mean that quantitative as well as qualitative scenario techniques are used by social movements and representatives of civil society to make their voices heard through “politics by time” (Aykut, 2015; Chailleux, 2020). Transformative change needs to be a democratizing process that includes opportunities to allow a broader range of actors (beyond formal experts) to reconsider how the rationale and scope of an assessment have been set and with whose influence. Rather than clinging to the optimistic idea that more co-production will automatically achieve greater impact and better outcomes, it is necessary to acknowledge that there will always be diverse views about inclusivity and appropriate representation (Beck and Forsyth, 2020, 223).

The present and future of sustainability are not necessarily characterized by the politics of “post-sustainability” (Blühdorn, 2016). Rather, what we currently see is a limited plurality (and partly interrelatedness) of multiple temporal orders, concepts, and modalities of sustainability (Adloff and Neckel, 2019). The recent temporalization of spatial concepts such as the semantic shift from “multi-level governance” to “multi-temporal governance” (Hanusch and Biermann, 2020, 35) underscores the importance of research on the relation between time and sustainability. The long-term effects and challenges of such “infrastructures of future making” (Esguerra, 2019) in multitemporal contexts need to be studied and made explicit. Developing a three-dimensional view on the temporal modalities of sustainability policies may turn out to be useful for further exploring this area of study.

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CHAPTER 15

HOW IS THE FUTURE UNKNOWN?

Strategies for Preparing for an Uncertain Future

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IN this chapter, we reflect on the struggle of organizations and policymakers who want to prepare their policy, organization, or system for an unknown future. The question that guides our paper is as follows: *how can policymakers anticipate the uncertainty of the future?* In this chapter, we provide a conceptual language that can help to be more precise in discussions about the uncertainty of the future and also to distinguish between different types of organizational modes for dealing with long-term uncertainty. We start by exploring what makes it so difficult to look ahead “in time.” We argue that the problem of looking ahead is not really the “amount” of time ahead, but more the amount and type of dynamics that can take place in that period of time. We then explore different literatures and concepts for looking ahead in time, and different methods to deal with the uncertainty of possible dynamics. We then conceptualize three different modes or strategies for preparing for the uncertainty of the future.

PROBLEMS OF LOOKING AHEAD IN TIME

Looking “into” the future as an arena for policy draws attention to the role of time in policy. As the various chapters in this edited volume have shown, there are many different ways to think about time in relation to policy (Howlett and Goetz, 2014; Bressers et al., 2013; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Zerubavel, 2003; Adam, 1995, 2004). The flow of time can be envisioned as *clock time*, a positioning tool to plot action on a timeline; for example, a result is required on a temporal “location” two years from now, and

that provides the organization with an amount of time to work on it and get there. Time can also be seen as a *utility*; something a person or an organization can be short of, have in abundance, or “buy” and “sell,” for example, by outsourcing a task, hiring temporary new staff, or by leasing out some of its own. These utilitarian and positioning perspectives are often used in planning and project management and are a dominant perspective for policy design (Bressers et al., 2013; Pollitt, 2008; Van der Steen and Van Twist, 2012; Van der Steen and Van der Duin, 2012). Policy takes time to plan, solutions have a lead time before they are implemented, and effects may take a while to solidify into measurable and substantial results. The uncertainty of the future is often related to this utilitarian and positioning perspective of time; the future is hard to predict because it is “far away” in time and cannot yet be seen (Habegger, 2009; Armstrong, 2001; Walker et al., 2012; Wilkinson and Kupers, 2014; Bloemen et al., 2018b). Uncertainty is framed as a problem of temporal proximity; near is easier to know than far away in time; the farther away in time, the more uncertain an issue becomes.

However, in order to grasp the uncertainty of the future, it is necessary to take a different approach to time (Morçöl, 2012; Morçöl and Wachhaus, 2009; Teisman et al., 2009; Abbot, 2005; Pierson, 2004; Walker et al., 2012; Van der Steen et al., 2015); time is the space in which dynamics that shape policy take place and in which policy “works” (Nuijten et al., 2015). From this perspective of time, the real issue of time for policy is dynamics, not proximity (near or far) or the amount of time that is in stock (too much or too little). Problems, solutions, and conditions change over time; actors and factors interact; and the outcomes of these interactions construct the social world. Conditions for policy are not fixed, but change over time in complex cycles of interaction. These interactions happen in time, at varying pace and intensity; it takes time for interactions to happen. Time provides the space for interactions to take place. This is a process of evolution and fundamental change, but also of possible stability and dynamic equilibrium. Interactions may create stability in time, a process that is often referred to as path dependency—the repetition of actions and interactions that constructs embedded paths and routines (Pierson, 2004). At other times, interactions evoke change and lead to sometimes radical change in the status quo. Time is space for dynamics, of which the result can be stability, change, and anything in between.

When we take this particular approach to time, the perspective on policy for the future also changes. Time is then a space for cycles of interactions to take place and for effects to evoke new reactions and new patterns of interaction. The future is uncertain because there is much temporal space for interactions; proximity is not the problem, the issue is the amount of interaction and the degree of predictability of these interactions. This confines the study of the future to analyzing the patterns and interactions, innovations, and new relations of a system “into” the space of future-times (Van der Heijden, 2005; Bell, 2003; Brown et al., 2000; WRR, 2010). Looking ahead in time, for example, by conducting a study of possible futures scenarios, is the making of an estimate of the flow of interactions of actors and factors in the time-space of a future (Van der Steen, 2016).

Exploring the future and looking ahead into the space of time mean attempting to foresee interactions and the possible conditions and outcomes of these interactions.

The future is inherently “open,” in the sense that systems can theoretically take any possible shape, as they are not bounded to a current status. At the same time, the future is embedded in the present and the past; past and present provide conditions from which the future develops, partly in substance—such as demographics and natural conditions—but also in social constructions that root behavior. The future is thus open, but not empty (WRR, 2010; Veenman, 2013; Burt and Van der Heijden, 2003). The future is fundamentally open and also bounded in the past and present. The future can be anything—including completely discontinuous with the past—but often it is merely a continuation of the present. The “art of anticipation” is to explore the future in such a way that delivers to both ends of that equation, and that balances continuity and discontinuity (Van der Steen et al., 2010; Poli, 2019). This is why anticipation is discussed in the plural: anticipation concerns futures, rather than the future (Wilkinson and Kupers, 2014; Bell, 2003; Ogilvy, 2002; Slaughter, 1995).

Different Types of Dynamics: Complex and Complicated Systems

When we see time as a place for interaction, it becomes important to be more precise about how we conceptualize interactions—and therefore be more precise about what we consider systems to be. To do so, it is helpful to make a distinction between complicated and (interactively) complex systems, as two distinct characteristics of systems that have entirely different structures and patterns of dynamics (Snowden, 2002).

Interactively complex systems are systems that consist of numerous components that interact with each other (Snowden, 2002; Morçöl, 2012; Lansing, 2003; Collander and Kupers, 2014; Morçöl and Wachhaus, 2009; Gerrits, 2012; Dennard et al., 2008; Nuijten et al., 2015). Components are part of the whole, but they are neither guided nor bound by the whole (Maruyama, 1963); there is no single set of rules that defines the systems and explains the behavior of its parts. Systems are the result of interactions between different parts of the system. Moreover, parts can produce behavior and interaction that was not predetermined in the current rules of the system; a system is not limited to what is already “in it.” New behavior, new parts, and new relations can emerge. Furthermore, the interaction of parts can change the rules and the system as a whole as well. Not only are parts of the systems not defined or determined by the whole, interactions of agents also change the system and produce new rules. Interactive complexity is a dynamic process in which the system and agents coevolve in their mutual interactions (Morçöl, 2012; Gerrits, 2012).

Interactive dynamics and emergence distinguish complexity from complicatedness (Snowden, 2002; Morçöl, 2012; Teisman et al., 2009; Collander and Kupers, 2014; Gerrits, 2012; Byrne and Callaghan, 2013). Complicated systems consist of many parts that are difficult to grasp in full. However, in the end they can be understood and predicted, as they follow from a stable structure. Many organizations or production processes involve many parts and require specific expertise; however, although components are manifold,

they remain stable and can be mapped in full. Complicated systems can be known, as long as sufficient time, resources, and expertise are assigned. Moreover, understanding of a complicated system allows for a prospective theory about what the system will do given the circumstances (Ashmos et al., 2000).

This is what Weick (1995) and Haraldsson (2000) refer to as uncertainty, which they contrast with ambiguity. Uncertainty is resolved by acquiring information about the system; closing the information gap will produce the certainty needed to understand and control the system; or to provide assurance over the quality of processes, outputs, and the control of the management over the organization. This is what has constituted the internal audit profession; auditors acquire objective, systematic information about complicated systems in order to reduce uncertainty and allow for managerial system control (Fadzil et al., 2005).

However, amid interactive complexity more information is not the solution; interactively complex systems produce ambiguity instead of uncertainty (Weick, 1995). The problem is not that the information is not available, but that the interaction itself is dynamic, and that patterns and structures continuously evolve (Morçöl, 2012; Teisman and Klijn, 2008; Teisman et al., 2009). Interactions do not happen within a stable structure, but interactions change the patterns, relations, and structures of the system itself. People learn, circumstances are affected, new patterns emerge, relations become activated by others' actions. Interactive complexity is about dynamics. Systems are continuously coevolving; coevolution means that the systems and parts do not evolve within the given rules and bounds of the system, but that rules, bounds, and structures are part of the evolution in the system as well. The system is in a state of permanent development and cannot be predicted or known permanently (Gerrits, 2012; Teisman et al., 2009; Teisman and Klijn, 2008).

The contrast between interactive complexity and complicatedness implies that it is not possible to generate complete or absolute insight about the quality, output, development, or future of a complex system, whereas that is possible for a complicated system (Snowden, 2002; Van der Steen, 2016). A complicated system is uncertain until it is explored and known through a process of information gathering; a complex system remains ambiguous, even when more information becomes available and more interpretations of possible meanings and patterns are brought up (Weick, 1995). Acquiring information to resolve the informational uncertainty of a system is viable under the presumptions of complicatedness, but it does not produce the expected outcomes under conditions of interactive complexity. Not because the methods are wrong, but because they do apply less well to the conditions of interactive complexity.

Different Concepts of Causality: Linear and Circular Causality

Even though a complex system cannot be known and always remains ambiguous, it is not, by all means, a random process. On the contrary; many complex systems are rather stable over time and "follow" recurring patterns of behavior (Snowden, 2002; Collander

and Kupers, 2014). Interactive complexity still involves causality, which distinguishes it from a chaotic system (Lansing, 2003). Interactive complexity calls for a different notion of causation. The study of causality mechanisms in interactive complexity suggests that causality should be understood in circular and cyclical rather than in linear terms (e.g., Perrow, 1986; Senge, 1990; Lansing, 2003; Cavana and Mares, 2004; Van der Steen et al., 2015; Nuijten et al., 2015). Central to this concept of causality is the interconnectedness of elements of a system and the feedback mechanisms that shape the interactions between them; actions generate feedback that either reinforces or balances out the primary action. The feedback in interactions produces the dynamics in interactively complex systems (Gerrits, 2012; Teisman et al., 2009).

Loops can have a self-balancing effect—for instance, when an effect ignites a dynamic to compensate for it; such loops are referred to as equilibrating systems (Maruyama, 1963) or self-balancing systems (Senge, 1990). Other loops strengthen their own dynamics; effects trigger new interactions that further enhance the original effects. These are referred to as deviation-amplifying loops, self-reinforcing systems, or positive loops. Systems characterized by self-reinforcing loops will be more volatile and prone to rapid downward or upward spirals (Sterman, 2000) because small and seemingly insignificant changes will set spirals in motion that can lead to highly magnified outcomes. Systems with many self-balancing loops are more stable, because the system itself bounces back after initial disruptions. Systems cannot be predicted or known, but studies suggest that it is possible to recognize recurring loops and other circular patterns in interactive complexity (Morçöl, 2012; Gerrits, 2012; Teisman and Klijn, 2008).

Circular causality structures the dynamics in interactively complex systems; amid interactive complexity, circular patterns are anchors to understand, assess, and to some degree, foresee developments (Nuijten et al., 2015; Van der Steen et al., 2015; Gerrits, 2012; Teisman et al., 2009). This opens the door for professional methods and tools—such as from the internal auditor—to assess and control the risks and challenges interactive complexity sets for organizations. That is highly important, because organizations and society rely heavily on these systems; they are needed to control risks, secure safety, increase resilience, preserve value, or prevent accidents from occurring.

Different Questions: From How Uncertain Is the Future, to How Is the Future Uncertain?

If we conceptualize time as space for dynamics, then the ability to foresee the future becomes a function of two variables: (1) the *nature* of the dynamics and (2) the *amount* of time (as the space for the dynamics to unfold) (Van der Steen, 2016).

As for the nature of the dynamics, we have seen that there is a distinction between complicated and complex systems. Complicated systems consist of many actors, factors, and relations, but the relations between the elements of the system are stable. This creates predictability of the system. Complex systems consist of many (or few) actors, factors, and relations, but the relations themselves are dynamic and emergent. The system is not

limited to the current state but can change over time, as a product of interaction. This makes the system inherently unpredictable. However, complexity also still involves causality. The causality is dynamic and circular (as opposed to stable and linear in a complicated system), but it is causal nonetheless. There are patterns and sources of stability in a complex system, and these provide a basis for study (and foresight) in a complex system.

The amount of time is related to the nature of the system. Measuring time in terms of clock time does not help understand the dynamics in systems. Instead, it makes more sense to look at “turnover time” and “time cycles” in the system. For a day trader on the stock market, the long term can be the end of the week; for an asset manager of a pension fund, 2030 is the short term. The amount of time should be understood in relation to the specific system and/or topic. If time allows many cycles of dynamics, much turnover time for the system, there is “much time”; if there is space for few time cycles or turnover, there is “little time.” The long term is the availability of much space for interaction; the short term implies that there is limited/little time for dynamics.

The combination of these two factors can be used to be more specific about the nature of and need for anticipation for policy issues. Complicated systems are to a large extent foreseeable and can be subject to very detailed long-range planning. They are surprisingly predictable. It is unproblematic that there is a long time horizon (much space for dynamics), since the dynamic is stable and therefore predictable. In contrast, complex systems are predictably surprising; it is entirely foreseeable that they cannot be foreseen; even if there is little space for dynamics, the dynamics are unpredictable. That is why an analysis of possible futures of a policy should begin with answering the question, what type of system is the policymaker dealing with? That requires a reframing of the problem of policy design for an uncertain future from “how uncertain is the future?” to “how is the future uncertain?”

TWO TRADITIONS FOR LOOKING AHEAD IN TIME

In spite of its inherent uncertainty, it is still possible and productive to attempt to “look ahead in time” and assess the possible dynamics of a system in future times. Theory about long-term analysis typically identifies two main approaches to study possible futures and portray future dynamics of a system in the space of time: forecasting and foresight (Bell, 2003; Slaughter, 1995; Van der Steen, 2017). We will discuss each of them here and also discuss some of the more recent developments in both fields.

Two Approaches to Anticipation: Forecasting and Foresight

Forecasting is the tradition in which quantitative projection is used to identify different possible futures (Armstrong, 2001; Van der Steen, 2017). A projection is based on a

causal model, often embedded in current trends and historical data. A crucial choice in forecasting is the design of the model; which actors and factors, and which relations, are included in the model and are considered—literally—when making the forecast. A forecast “calculates” the outcomes of interactions between actors and factors in the model, over a certain space of time; it portrays paths through the modeled system, within the relations within the model and therefore also within the margins of the model. A forecast is not necessarily a continuation of the status quo, but it does inevitably produce a continuation of the “reality in the model”; it is continuation within the bounds of the model (Walker et al., 2012).

Foresight is the tradition in which qualitative data are used to initiate debates and thinking about possible, plausible, and preferable futures (Bell, 2003; Van der Duin et al., 2009, 2010; Chermack, 2004; Wilkinson and Kupers, 2014; Klooster and Van Asselt, 2006; Glenn and Gordon, 2006). There is discussion about patterns and there is causality involved, but the range of possible futures is not limited to a fixed and predefined causal model; causality does not have to be precise and final beforehand, but notions about the relevant actors, factors, causes, effects, and relations can develop during the process of discussing possible futures (WRR, 2010). Foresight is based on a more qualitative and less strict definition of a model and sees modeling more as a noun than a verb. Foresight allows for less linear thinking about potential futures and can produce more radical futures; possible relations and discontinuity can be discursively added to the discussion of possible dynamics and can be considered in imagining possible futures; even though the exact nature or “value” of the development is unknown and undefined, it can still become part of the discussion of futures dynamics (Van der Steen, 2017; Paillard, 2006; Yoda, 2011; Kuosa, 2011; Noordegraaf et al., 2014).

Forecasting results in statements about how things will be in the future; not in the sense that one future is pinpointed as “the future,” but the model inherently produces “hard” numbers about the range of simulated scenarios; it produces probabilities, effects, costs, and benefits. Foresight results in images about how things might be, not in terms of numbers, but in narratives, images, or a “look and feel” of possible futures and futures dynamics (Bell, 2003; Burt and Van der Heijden 2003; Van der Heijden 2005). Foresight is about identifying conceivable possibilities—“possible, plausible, and preferable futures”—using a broad arsenal of sources that are accepted as both “possible” and “workable” (Ogilvy 2002).

Because of the central role of the model, as the causal environment in which different scenarios are simulated, forecasts are primarily based on quantitative resources. The model requires quantitative data and also is based on numerical values for relations; for example, in order to forecast the possible effects of better pensions on the lifestyle of pensioners, the forecaster needs to assign a mathematical value to the relation between “available income” and “types of behavior”; the relation needs to be defined in terms of cause and effect, but also in terms of “size” of the relation (e.g., “an increase in income of 1.0 results in an increase of 1.2 in time spent on leisure activities by pensioners”). The relation cannot simply be named; it needs to be numbered as well.

Foresight allows more space for interpretation, intuition, and argumentation and looks for “signs” of change and trends that have yet to be scientifically validated (Splint and Van Wijck, 2012; Van der Steen et al., 2011; Maier et al., 2016). Foresight seeks to interpret clues, rather than running established facts through a fixed causal model that reflects historic processes and causalities (which may not apply to the future in any case), often with several variations in either the model or the facts, so that diversity in the findings is established (the forecasters’ “scenarios”). In a foresight study, desirability and other normative judgments are a necessary part of the process. A foresight study does not make or prescribe choices, but it does incorporate notions of “value” into the scenarios (Slaughter 1995). In the same example of the behavior of pensioners, a foresight study could identify the possible relation between different elements in a system and “name” different outcomes and second-order or third-order effects of such outcomes; these can be considered by introducing them into the discourse about the future and reflecting on possible outcomes of the relation. In a foresight study it is not necessary to “number” each relation; naming them and bringing them into the debate about the future is enough to discursively add them into the narrative of possible futures.

Trends and Developments in the Fields of Futures Studies

One development in the world of forecasting is that the dramatically expanding capacity of computer power is enabling wider and “deeper” models. Forecasters argue that this allows them to do two things: they can map more elaborate paths and become more accurate in the developments they forecast. Widening the forecast means that more variables and relations can be entered into the model, to provide more detail in the model or to model wider ground. On the issue of accuracy, forecasters point to the now emerging ability to map more complex relations and to consider many, most—or some argue “all”—possible options of a causal relation (Bloemen et al., 2018a; Haasnoot et al., 2012; 2013; Groves and Lempert, 2007). Furthermore, if computer capacity grows even further, and transaction costs of calculation become almost nonexistent, forecasters argue that they can consider all possible dynamics in a complex system. This would mean that they can model all possible futures of a complex system and forecast all of the possible consequences, through all of the possible causal interactions, of an intervention. Extrapolation remains the principle of forecasting, but because the extrapolation can be done in with a limitless number of options, the extrapolation can be “whole.” The hypothetical outcome of this development is a model that is not predictive in the sense that it “knows” the future, but that it is able to map all of the possibilities of a system. It is important to note that this relates to a fundamental debate about complexity: can a complex system model be modeled in full, or will emergence and reflexivity inherently produce unforeseen turns and developments in the system that render each model at some point limited and outdated?

There are also developments in the world of foresight. One of the problems of the typical two-axes scenario method is that, although it opens a debate about the

future, it inherently narrows it also; the method reduces the future to two so-called core uncertainties that produce four very distinct directions for the future or future worlds (Van Asselt et al., 2007; Van der Duin and Van der Steen, 2012). Even though this opens up the thinking about possible futures, it also lays a heavy burden on the choice for the core uncertainties (Van der Steen, 2016). For most wicked policy issues, there are not two but many more “core uncertainties.” A more fundamental version of that same critique is that it is inherently uncertain what the core uncertainties should be. Some will argue that this is beside the point of a foresight study; accuracy is not the purpose of such a process; it is the active engagement of a group with possible futures that matters. At the same time, it is evident that the conversation is guided by the choice of scenarios; that is why in the field of foresight studies attempts are made to find new means to systematically cover a wider range of uncertainties and ignite a broader and richer conversation about possible futures (Van der Duin and Van der Steen, 2012).

Interesting also are attempts to link foresight to new technologies such as virtual reality and serious gaming, but also to other modes to make scenarios experiential (e.g., Selin et al., 2015; Rijkens-Klomp, 2012). Such methods allow for a deeper and more interactive “experience” of possible futures that moves the process from an intellectual conversation about the future toward a more action-oriented process with possible futures (Van der Steen, 2016; Rijkens-Klomp, 2012; Wiebe et al., 2018). Examples of this are simulations in which adults can “experience” a day in their current home but in the conditions of a 70-year-old with minor disabilities; this is part of program to incentive adults to be more aware of financial preparations for old age and more specifically for the benefits of building or redesigning homes in such a way that they can accommodate future modifications easily. This is an example of an issue that people understand on a cognitive level but that only becomes “real” and consequential when people experience it by themselves, and in their own home. It is not enough for them to see images of possible futures or to study a spreadsheet or text that tells them about it; they need to “live” the future(s) in order to feel the urgency to act and to weigh options for doing so.

Also interesting are the attempts to apply the repertoire of forecasting to massive amounts of qualitative data; for example, by using software to analyze patterns in narratives or in images about the future, in media reports, social media posts, or in accounts by large populations of “ordinary” people who use self-reporting apps (e.g., the Cynefin Sensemaker app). That allows for the development of “big meaning,” the use of qualitative data to find apparent patterns in how people see possible futures and to find weak signals or early warnings of emergent developments (Van der Steen et al., 2013). That may allow researchers to see patterns in highly complex patterns, through a combination of forecasting methods and qualitative data.

An important challenge for the field of foresight is how to navigate the balance between creativity and facts, in a world where posttruth, alternative facts, and fact-free thinking have become more common (Nehme et al., 2012; Rijkens-Klomp, 2012; Hoppe, 2010). Foresight inherently involves a combination of fact and fiction, in the sense that participants and researchers develop possible futures in a creative process that looks

beyond mere facts (Nelson et al., 2008; Cairns et al., 2006). Discontinuity requires imagination, and even though that might be done in a systematic manner, it remains a problematic basis for policy study and political debate (Van der Steen and Van Twist, 2012; Van der Steen et al., 2016; Van der Steen, 2008; Groombridge, 2006). What exactly discerns a foresights study from a politically motivated “alternative truth”? Foresight studies cannot do without creativity and imagination, but they must at the same find an anchor to show for validity and methodological rigor.

A final noteworthy development in the field of forecasting is the attempt to tighten the link between possible pathways of the system and required policy interventions (Haasnoot et al., 2012; 2013; Walker et al., 2013; Bloemen et al., 2018b; Biesbroek et al., 2010; McCray et al., 2010). The adaptive pathways approach to climate adaptation policy in The Netherlands is an example of this. Extensive forecast models have projected a set of possible paths of the climate system in (in this case) The Netherlands and have identified signals and signposts that show in which of the paths reality is developing (Bloemen et al., 2018b). If signals show that the system is moving into a different pathway, an “automated” policy response is triggered that sets in motion the predefined required policies for that particular path. The idea of this concept is that not only the development of the system but also the package of policy interventions is predesigned and optimized by using models to “test” for its consequences (Walker et al., 2010). This is a further extension of the use of forecasting models, beyond mere “knowledge for policy” into the model-as-policy; policy is part of the model, as an automated response that is designed into the model (Haasnoot et al., 2012). This brings policymaking up to par with other automated “decisions,” such as automated trading on the stock market or automated safety locks in critical systems. At the same time, this is also a problematic and highly political development, since the decision making is transferred into the forecast model.

THREE DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANIZING FOR THE UNKNOWN-UNKNOWN

In spite of systematic attempts to look ahead “into” the space of time, the future remains inherently unknown; at least, in the case of a complex system, it is impossible to definitively “solve” the uncertainty of the future; it remains an ambiguous “object” of interpretation. Therefore, “smart” policy for an uncertain future involves organizational strategies to deal with the predictable surprise of unforeseeable future developments—a capacity to respond to unforeseen emerging developments, as they occur over time. There are various strategies to prepare for the unknown (Van der Steen, 2016). There is wide-ranging conceptual debate about the “exact” meaning of these concepts; here we will not go deeper into that debate about the meaning of the concepts, but rather focus on the underlying principles. Robustness, resilience, and adaptivity are three concepts

that are often used in that context (Bloemen et al., 2018b; Howlett et al., 2018; Capano and Woo, 2018b; Capano, 2018a; Boin and Van Eeten, 2013):

- *robustness* is the ability to resist shocks and not collapse under the pressure of unexpected developments; for example, by building dams, walls, or other protective structures around the system.
- *resilience* is the ability to absorb shocks, not by keeping the shock out, but by bending along and bouncing back. Resilience is the capacity to bounce back, without damage to the core of the system.
- *adaptivity* is the ability to jump away just before a shock hits the system; an agile system requires the ability to move quickly and to notice threats and opportunities early enough to move away.

We will illustrate this with examples of different strategies adopted by public organizations to organize for uncertainty and deal “proactively” with yet-unknown futures.

A strategy of *robustness* invests in the capacity to absorb shocks and withstand external pressures (Capano and Woo, 2018a; 2018b). The organization builds walls, strengthens its foundation, or develops other defense mechanisms to protect its core. In the world of water management, this strategy consists of building waterworks, such dams, dykes, and increased discharge capacity for floodwaters. Robustness involves the building of “high-enough” defenses to withstand pressure; this implies two requirements. First, the organization needs to “know” what type of external threat it is preparing for; what is the direction of the walls or dams, and what is the nature of the threat (water, wind, fire, invasion?). Different threats require different barriers. Second, the organization needs to assess the level of threat to prepare for. An organization can prepare for a category 4 storm but also for one of category 5. This holds the risk of overpreparation or underpreparation; both are costly. Overpreparation drains the organization of means it could have spent otherwise; underpreparation could lead to high costs of damage on top of the costs of the preparations that were made.

A strategy of *resilience* takes a different approach to organizational preparation (Boin and Van Eeten, 2013; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007; Välikangas, 2010; Capano and Woo, 2018a). Here, the principle of preparation is not to keep external shock out, but to invest in capacity to bounce back from external shocks. The organization bends under the pressure but does not break; after the pressure recedes, the organization quickly bounces back to its original state. Investments are directed at the capacity to bounce back, rather than in the capacity to keep pressure out (Boin and Van Eeten, 2013). This principle can be implemented in the design of structures, buildings, systems, personnel management, and organizational culture (Hollnagel et al., 2006; Hamel and Välikangas, 2003). Examples from the world of water management are the “Room for the River” program in the Netherlands and the urban “Water Squares” (Van der Steen et al., 2017; Bloemen et al., 2018b). Room for the River is a program that creates designated overflow areas where the river can cede excessive water; instead of raising more dykes to control the flow of water, the river is “allowed” to overflow in peak moments. When the

water recedes, these overflow areas can again be used as farmlands. Water Squares work similarly but are used as overflow capacity for times when excessive rainfall exceeds the capacity of the drainage system in the city. The squares are filled with excess water, which allows the rest of the system to function as normal. After the rain, the water in the squares recedes again into the regular drainage system and the squares can be used again by the public. In both cases the overflow areas are designed and built in such a way that there is minimal damage from overflowing, that the restoration of the old capacity (“bouncing back”) has minimal costs and is almost effortless, and has a normal function during normal periods; they are not spare capacity in the sense that their primary function is to be ready to overflow; they have a regular function (e.g., agriculture, leisure) and can also function as overflow area.

The third possible principle for organizational preparation is *adaptivity*, the capacity to move quickly in order to avert pressure and damage from shocks (Swanson et al., 2009; Bloemen et al., 2018b; Van der Wal, 2018). Whereas robustness and resilience are based on a fixed location, the essence of adaptivity is movement; the capacity to move whenever shock or pressure requires it. In order to improve the capacity to move, an organization needs to limit its commitments; no physical ties to a building or a location, as few long-term contracts as possible, shallow relations with the environment, and also a culture of temporality of ties (Van der Steen, 2016). The organization is built to last, but in order to last, it has to be able to move. This does not necessarily require an exact estimate of where the risk is coming from or how big or small it is; more important is the general ability of the organization to notice disturbance early and make quick assessments of possible meanings of early warnings, and translate these into repertoires for action. This is often related to organizational design with decentralized authority, “lean” structures, and short feedback loops in organizational processes.

The various strategies for organizing for the unknown dynamics in future-times highlight different modes of preparation; this draws attention away from the question “are we prepared for the future?” toward the question “how are we prepared for the unknown future?” (Van der Steen, 2016). Preparation has an entirely different meaning in each of the three strategies; the strategies can be used as design principles but also as a heuristic to reflect on the current approach toward organizing for the unknown.

The strategies of each present different instruments for preparation but also have their own specific distribution of costs and benefits (Capano and Woo, 2018a; Bloemen et al. 2018b; Van der Steen, 2016, 2017). A strategy of adaptivity can be beneficial for the organization, but at the expense of the direct environment. Hiring employees on temporary contracts makes an organization more agile, but at the cost of employees. Moving important facilities to a different city in the light of possible flooding means that a city loses some of its economic and social strength. Resilience is costly, in the sense that it inherently involves a period of flood, and damage, which can be painful for those who are directly involved (Boin and Van Eeten, 2013). Even if the system is able to bounce back quickly, there is inherently a period of time where there is pain, damage, and hurt. Moreover, resilience is quite a conservative concept, in the sense that it works toward a return to a previous status quo of the system (Capano and Woo, 2018a). The system is

restored to its prior status, but there is no fundamental reflection on the causes of the overflow, the shock, or the disturbance of the system; moreover, the balance of power in the system, or the distribution of cost and benefit, or of opportunity and risk, are not part of the process of bouncing back. In its most literal form, resilience is not a process of learning, but only a process of restoring to the initial state. Resilience is a dynamic strategy, in the sense that it involves “movement”; but it is movement to remain the same, not to move toward a different state (Boin and Van Eeten, 2013). The same goes for robustness, although this is not a strategy of movement but one of holding on; the purpose of robustness is to remain firmly in the same place, in spite of strong pressure to move (Capano and Woo, 2018a; Bloemen et al., 2018b). This inherently involves choices for the level of protection that is needed for certain elements of the system; not all parts of the system can be “defended” to the same level. There are choices to be made about elements that are expendable.

TIME-SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE: POLICY DESIGN FOR AN UNKNOWN FUTURE

Anticipation is the deliberate act of taking the future into account in present-day action (Poli, 2019; Ho, 2012). In this chapter we have attempted to provide language that allows for a more precise discussion of how to anticipate unknown futures. First, we have elaborated on the role of time in policy; we have shown that time can be seen as a space for interaction. Time itself is not the driver of uncertainty; it is the interaction that takes place in the space time provides. That is also why the “quantity” of time itself is not the most important factor; more important is the type of interaction and the nature of the system.

In a system of interactive complexity, interactions are bound to produce unforeseen and unforeseeable dynamics; the causality itself is dynamic, relations change over time, as actors and factors interact. Therefore, a complex system is predictably surprising; the nature of surprise is unknown, but it is bound to happen and can therefore hardly be a “real” surprise. That is different for stable or “merely” complicated systems; in complicated systems there are many actors and factors, but the interactions and relations between them are stable and fixed; they do not change over time or as a consequence of interactions. Such systems are actually surprisingly predictable, in the sense that the stability of causal relations allows them to be foreseen, planned, managed, and known far ahead in time.

The notion of time as space for interaction also sheds a different light on the concept of “near” and “distant” future. The amount or length of time is not what matters; it is the “number” of interactions that matter for the predictability of a system. If the cycles of interactions are short (take little time), the long-term can be actually already quite close by; if interactions take long, with slow cycles, long stretches of time can still be quite stable.

We have discussed two strategies for looking ahead “into” the space of time: forecasting and foresight. Both strategies use different methods and principles to systematically analyze possible dynamics in time-as-space. Each method results in different images of possible futures that can be discerned into possible, plausible, and preferable futures. However, we have also argued that in a complex system the future always remains ambiguous and “deeply uncertain” (Walker et al., 2013). That is why anticipation also involves organizational strategy; the design of an organization that is able to deal with unknown, unexpected events or dynamics. Moreover, we have discussed three possible design principles for organizing systems that are fit for dealing with the “unknown-unknown” future; each approach highlights different principles to organize for uncertainty and prepare the organization for unknown circumstances.

Taken together, these concepts provide tools for anticipatory strategies for policy design and for the study of the future and methods for anticipating uncertainty. We stress that it is important to make an explicit choice for the method to “look into the future” and an explicit choice for design principles for organizing the organization or system for the uncertainty of the future. The study of the future and attempts to anticipate the future require a combination of these elements; a deliberate attempt to look ahead, while also considering the inherent uncertainty of the future. Moreover, we have unpacked different elements for organizing for an unknown future; this requires the design of an organization or a system that is able to respond to uncertainty “over time” and translate early warnings of emergent developments into organizational responses. More research is necessary to study the various outcomes of these different strategies. It also draws attention to a change in the focus in the concept of preparation for an uncertain future; this is both the ability of looking ahead and the ability to respond along the way; not because of a lack of effort to reduce uncertainty, but as an acknowledgment of the ambiguity of the future. In the context of ambiguity, “to prepare for the future” is the ability to look ahead but also to design capacity to deal with the predictable surprises of the future. This opens up an interesting new field for researchers, to study different strategies and methods of organizations and policies that attempt to deal with uncertainty.

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CHAPTER 16

CRISES IN TIME

Fast- and Slow-Burning Crises in the European Union

LEONARD SEABROOKE AND ELENI TSINGOU

WHY is temporality important for understanding crises? In this chapter, we provide some answers based on how different actors distinguish and make sense of the crises they face and how timelines are important in these deliberations. We develop an argument about fast- and slow-burning crises, starting with some observations about the recent European crises that help bring different actors in focus (see also Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019). We proceed with an overview of theorizing on crisis and time and elaborate on our approach and its contribution, stressing the importance of distinguishing between authorities and publics if we are to understand crises in time. We close with an illustration based on an issue area that is relevant from a time horizon perspective but has not been sufficiently covered in the literature: demographic change.

Europeans have been facing problems that differ in intensity, tempo, and rhythm. A crisis follows different rhythms for those experiencing it, ranging from deflated expectations of prosperity to panics over who is fit to lead or how to struggle through. While there are important discussions over whether the moniker “crisis” requires a change in the current political order (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni and Hofmann, 2020), crisis talk is part of our everyday life, whether we are discussing the economy, climate, health, or migration. For many Europeans, and for those who follow the fortunes of the European project, this is not particularly new. Crises have often been viewed as klaxons for further integration, institutional innovation, and regulatory harmonization (Ioannou et al., 2015). Long before Covid-19 and the invasion of Ukraine added yet new dimensions to the crisis debates, there were concerns that the momentum that spurred the European project along was being challenged. For many, Europe’s crises since the late 2000s did not lead to institutional solutions that have popular support, nor did they generate governance mechanisms fit to meet major challenges. Following a decade of crisis management, progressive forms of deliberative and consensus-based expert discussions

did emerge, but they were also overshadowed by a new contractual form of European governance.

Starting with the economic sphere, European institutions responded to the sovereign debt crisis with “executive supranationalism” (Trondal, 2010). Given the shock to the system, economic technocrats and lawyers scrambled to form networks that would provide new rules for crisis management (Haagensen, 2020). The amassing of European executive powers with support from the national executives of powerful members produced crisis management via “contractualization” on economic management and restructuring, with apparent rule makers and rule takers (Mendez, 2013). While this dynamic has long been in play, the intensity of the contradictions and conflicts it generated increased with strong perceptions of crisis management producing winners and losers within Europe, and with clear north-south and west-east dynamics. It also opened up new opportunities for those challenging the European project to do so on economic grounds and through nationalist identity politics, as in the case of Brexit (Rosamond, 2020). For a time, the rise of the political right in several national environments was also backed by fears that being European entails reducing welfare standards and losing tax monies to support distant or unworthy others. In the rich northwest and restless east, political elites openly spoke of a Europe that is divided into economic unions or national protectorates. In the south, we observed calls for European solidarity and grassroots attempts at social inclusion. Across the board, we saw suspicion of those beyond Europe’s borders and debates about who is “truly” European (Pytias, 2021).

All of these trends accentuated a narrative of crisis in Europe before the “permanent emergency mode” of the recent pandemic came along (Wolff and Ladi, 2020). Talk of the European Union’s unraveling has been common, though dampened by the spectacle associated with a convoluted Brexit process, the coordinated reactions to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, as well as the perceived need for a European-level response to climate change challenges despite the crisis of effects on actual European Union activity on environmental issues (Burns and Tobin, 2020). Early pandemic management, at least on economic issues, also helped put criticisms in perspective (Ladi and Tsarouhas, 2020). But there remains long-term confusion over who belongs to the European project (Fligstein, 2008), as well as concerns that European solidarity has been stretched to its limit by recent crises (McNamara, 2015). Commentators have pointed to a technocratic-democratic dilemma in the future of the monetary union and the euro (Offe, 2015). They have also shown that the reforms required are unlikely to gain popular support, and that the burden of common European austerity policies have disproportionately fallen on not only Europe’s south but also to the east (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012). Anti-EU political sentiment in these countries is easy to understand. A prominent concern here is that supranational technocracy has de-democratized the particularly European form of capitalism while not opening up political space for objections (Schmidt 2016). There has also been a resurgence of ideas about differentiated integrated models (Leruth et al., 2019).

Vivien Schmidt (2014) has suggested that we focus on how European institutions should have more legitimate “throughput” processes so that the public can see how

governance works (see also Steffek, 2019). Civil society actors are actively reporting on how European institutions lack transparency and accountability, with the hope of reigniting political interest in the European project. Others look to political leaders to reinvigorate the European project, as has been the case during previous crises (Parsons, 2003). According to the common account, such leaders should look beyond short-term horizons of the polls and toward changing general attitudes toward a peaceful, prosperous, collective, and now green Europe (Habermas, 2011).

These useful critiques point out that there is a gap between Brussels-focused policy discussions and everyday socioeconomic conditions in Europe. This gap is a cause for alarm. We have seen that it provides political space to populist anti-EU parties, often at the far-right end of the spectrum. Such parties have gained serious electoral ground in many member states. Though their fortunes differ, many have been normalized as members of the political class. We have also seen that the gap risks unraveling social and economic policies that have been supported by the European project—though one has to be critical here (van Apeldoorn, 2014). One conclusion is that European policy elites can no longer act as self-legitimizing rule-bearers (Barker, 2001).

Without addressing these concerns, the question that has occupied the European Commission during much of this long crisis period, “more or less Europe?” will fall on deaf ears. European citizens are unlikely to be pondering it if they are instead asking “more or less poverty?” (Storm and Naastepad, 2015), “more or less family?” (León and Pavolini, 2014), or “more or less health?” (Kentikelenis, 2015). To do so we need some tools to break down types of crisis dynamics, and decide how to pick over what can be done. This requires an understanding of the messiness of the timelines of the crises facing Europe and how these have challenged the different institutions and actors of European integration (Laffan, 2016). The European Union, facing different crises at once, needs to coordinate across different “timescapes” to address them (Goetz, 2017), depending on the relevant institutions and competences, and on the timelines for budgets, leaders, and policy development. It also has to contend with conflicting demands for prioritization and for tackling what are not neatly separate but intertwined crises (Kentikelenis, 2018a). To break down types of crisis dynamics, therefore, we also need a framework that makes sense of what these timelines are for different actors in the process, and how they are experienced by authorities, but also by publics. Some crises stand out because they have required active and visible time-sensitive crisis management, such as the financial crisis, followed by the sovereign debt crisis, the migration crisis, and the pandemic crisis. We understand them as crises partly because they fit established “political time” (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009). But if the perceptions and experiences of all actors are to be taken seriously, the intensity and timetable of crisis management alone cannot determine what constitutes a crisis. We need tools to understand why the time dimension of the environmental crisis is perceived differently by authorities and publics, why the sovereign debt crisis and the fiscal crisis are treated as distinct, or why demographic change may be viewed through a crisis lens too.

FAST- AND SLOW-BURNING CRISES

Crises can be differentiated by their intensity, the pace of change, and patterns established between actors and events. There is a library of work on patterns of crisis. Much of this work is concerned with the rhythm of crisis, how it moves, with rhythm providing a pattern of return into a core problem. Marxist theories of crisis are especially instructive on how capitalism produces cycles of falling profit and the over-accumulation of capital relative to exploitation, which then triggers renewed and heightened competition for productive capital (Yaffe, 1973). For some Marxist theories of crisis, capitalist crises are ingrained within the system, derived from the contradictions and irrationalities of that system, and should provide a call for political action to overthrow capitalism (Wright, 1975). There is a distinct rhythm and heightened tempo, until it all comes crashing down.

Karl Polanyi's "double movement" also follows a distinct rhythm, as the bourgeoisie craft markets to become disembedded from society, and then peasants and the aristocracy push back to re-embed markets in society (Polanyi, 1944; see, more recently, Kentikelenis, 2018b). In these accounts the state-market opposition is a crisis generator, with the state failing to live up to its own claims to legitimacy as private interests offload their concerns onto the public budget (Habermas, 1973; Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999).

Postmodern accounts of crisis also suggest a rhythm to crisis. Crisis is a necessary part of a to-and-fro dance with our image of what it is to be modern. Once the state is weakened by late capitalism, the population will perceive crisis as a value, a contradictory morality to what we understand as modernity. The state and capitalist actors can dull the intensity of these crises by providing a steady stream of minor crises to the public (Baudrillard, 1987). A crisis is a moment in the rhythm of late capitalism where actors need to converge on a sensible solution but where convergence on a consensus is inhibited by delusions of grandeur and arguments about what is real (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991).

The contemporary literature on crisis dynamics typically focuses on their rhythm, their intensity, and the drivers of crisis. This work examines how crises can be endogenously created by political narratives (Hay, 2016), how they provide opportunities for great thinkers to rally for change (Blyth, 2002, 2013), how crisis provides opportunities for elites to translate external ideas into a local context (Ban, 2016), how mass responses establish platforms for legitimate change (Seabrooke, 2007; Seabrooke and Thomsen, 2016), how crises include spatial reconfigurations (Jessop et al., 2008), and how crises mesh discursive and structural elements (Sum and Jessop, 2013). The general stress within much of this work is on how particular leaders enable crisis discourses. The intensity of crises is a reflection of exogenous shocks and endogenous construction, of external events, or of "this is how it has to be." This scholarship is concerned with the rhythm of crisis in establishing patterns of action when a crisis occurs. It is less concerned with issues of tempo. An important exception that addresses how crises include a tempo and rhythm is Wesley Widmaier's (2016) work that stresses the psychology of

leadership. Widmaier shows how leaders create crises through “fast-thinking” strong emotional reactions to events, including ethical scandals, as well as “slow-thinking” policy settlements where rationality prevails but represses ethical concerns. From this viewpoint, crises follow a rhythm of scandal and false settlement, of blustering outrage and overconfidence in rational solutions.

We propose that crises can be depicted as “fast-burning” or “slow-burning,” which differ in their intensity and tempo. Scholars of political science and public administration will recognize these terms from Paul ‘t Hart and Arjen Boin’s (2001, 32–34) work. They understand fast-burning crises as shocks, like a plane being hijacked or a volcano erupting, while slow-burning crises are creeping and protracted, like environmental crises, where political and scientific uncertainty is present (see also Nohrstedt, 2008). This conception of fast- and slow-burning crises has been used extensively in the crisis management literature, focusing on how leaders make decisions (Boin et al., 2005), as well as the importance of framing contests to control political narratives (Boin et al., 2009; Carstensen and Schmidt, 2018). If our concern is with assessing the intensity, tempo, and rhythm of crises, then we need a framework that extends beyond what is in leaders’ minds and that can make connections between governing institutions and social change.

We can immediately identify fast-burning crises because of their volatility, from their noxious smoke, and from the attention they draw based on their urgency. Fast-burning crises attract a lot of oxygen and energy, and the pace of burning is self-perpetuating, while policy or social attention provides fuel to the flames. The intensity can reinforce the tempo. They are the crises that are most obvious to us, such as the banking crisis of the late 2000s, the austerity programs of the 2010s, or the asylum-seeker crisis. Fast-burning crises are moments and ongoing events characterized by alarm and an urgent demand for political action. Such crises are times when knowledge is particularly “hot” in addressing problems, where interests seek clear and applied ideas and models that can put out the flames, even when they may not be the best long-term solutions (Callon, 1998). Fast-burning crises throw European institutions and their functions into sharp relief, bringing to the fore political, social, and economic interests to fight over how immediate problems should be addressed in the now. Fast-burning crises can increase public frustrations with the inadequacy of the EU’s governance architecture, raising questions about structural reform from politicians, policy elites, the media, and the general public. But they also provide opportunities for institutional innovation, as crisis containment and crisis management are expected.

A lack of intensity can also retard the rate of burning. Slow-burning crises produce less heat and less obvious smoke, but they nevertheless smolder as long as there is sufficient interest in them and the phenomena driving them continue. What we term a “slow-burning” crisis is critical for differentiating what kinds of EU governance architecture and associated modes of governance enhance the legitimacy of the European project. Slow-burning crises extend beyond the normal horizon of problem-solving, which is most intensively tied to electoral cycles at the national level and even to the different timelines associated with European Union politics. These crises are more “everyday” in

how they are considered by the public, as they are issues on which no immediate action is needed but where expectations about how to live are changing. They include issues such as the fiscal and financial sustainability of Europe; how governments can continue to provide public services to their population; and the political, social, and economic consequences of chronic unemployment and underemployment. They also increasingly include environmental concerns linked to climate change and biodiversity, as well as the framing of longer-term demographic changes (Hasselbalch, 2019). In slow-burning crises, politicians are less vocal in raising an alarm than during fast-burning crises, and knowledge is “cold” in the sense that experts consider and argue what constitutes good science in addressing the issue at hand (Callon, 1998; Shwed and Bearman, 2010). In slow-burning crises, it is professionals in expert networks, rather than politicians, who point to problems and prompt those in charge of the European governance architecture to address them (Coman, 2020). The absence of intensity, however, can also mean that expert voices can be drowned out, lobbied away, or relegated to less authoritative arenas in a search for pragmatic politics.

The political challenges to Europe include both fast- and slow-burning crises. While politics is more immediately present in fast-burning crises, where national and European discourses concentrate on crisis resolution, in slow-burning crises a key factor is how issues are constructed and how discourses of response are articulated as European problems to be faced by particular modes of governance. Experts also often have incentives to do little other than to occupy the policy agenda, the policy space (Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2014), with less concern for policy change. They also face the challenge of crises being framed as competing policy priorities across time, such as “the economy versus the climate” or “migration versus fiscal responsibility.”

The notion of fast- and slow-burning crises also includes a rhythmic element. If governing institutions are limited in the amount of attention they can pay to particular issues, then this leads to policy “fire-fighting” over what is considered to be the most pressing issue of the time (Coman, 2018). Crises not being dealt with can then burn away and re-enter as political problems. Such behavior is to be expected in Europe given that there are limits to member states’ willingness to fund European institutions to solve common problems, different preferences on what problems matter more, and overlapping competences.

ACTUALITIES/NARRATIVES/ AUTHORITIES/SOCIETY

We do not consider the rhythm of crises to be determined by fast-burning and slow-burning periods, lurching from one to the other. This is not a general model of crisis generation and regeneration. Nor do we associate a specified set of features with one or the other. Rather, the notion of fast-burning and slow-burning is a heuristic device to

	Actualities	Narratives
Authorities	Programmes	Frames
Society	Experience	Expectations

FIGURE 16.1: Crisis Diagnosis Tools.

identify crisis issues, including where they overlap and intersect (Abbott, 2001), and to talk about how they are experienced, and thus what reactions, modes of governance, resources, and effects we may associate with them. Fast-burning and slow-burning crises are ideal types, which are “always constructed with a view to adequacy on the level of meaning” (Weber, 1978, 20). If we are interested in applying this logic to differentiating how crises are perceived, managed, or coped with by European institutions and society, then we end with a matrix, which we depict in Figure 16.1 (see also Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2019).

Populating the cells in the matrix allows us to then differentiate types of crises into fast- and slow-burning types, as well as reflect on the source of tensions within them.

Programs

In the first cell we have the *authorities/actualities* combination. This can be understood as existing policy programs. Here we follow John L. Campbell’s (2004) work, and consider *programs* to be theories and concepts that are cognitively embedded in the minds of policymakers and facilitate decision-making. How embedded these concepts and theories are matters: when knowledge is “hot” and policy crisis management is in full swing, for example, they are the filters through which *experience* is understood. For example, we know that the rise of executive supranationalism in European governance has occurred at the same time as an economic consensus around the need to use austerity policies to reform countries into sound economic management. This idea of austerity as best practice has been reinforced by networks of professional economists (Helgadóttir, 2016), networks that also provide the sinew between *programs* and *frames*.

Austerity-based policies are the most obvious form of programs implemented during Europe’s financial and sovereign debt crises (Kentikelenis, 2018b). These policies were strongly informed by ordoliberal ideas that determined how to deal with errant economic behavior during an economic shock (Ryner, 2015).

Institutions can also use programs to respond to fast-burning crises by doing little. While we saw some attempts at more consensual forms of governing akin to the Open Method of Coordination on issues like the Youth Guarantee, the expansion of executive supranationalism and intergovernmentalism occurred through both assertion and stealth (Schmidt 2016, 2020a): assertion through clubs like the Eurogroup and by

extending technocratic governance over previously national markets, and by stealth through inaction that then invites a policy response. Such a charge has been made against the European Central Bank, which has extended its powers considerably during the Eurozone crisis by “reluctantly” getting involved when it sees fit (Braun, 2016; Woodruff, 2016; Ban and Patenaude, 2019).

Programs have obvious implications for *experience*, as well as *expectations*, especially if crisis-perceived issues that are outside of a functionalist scope are ignored. As the distance between programs from European institutions and expectations from the European public widens we can expect greater legitimacy problems.

Frames

In the second cell we locate *frames* as a combination of *authorities* and *narratives*. Programs are derived from these frames, which are established over a longer period of time; frames originate from ideas and knowledge that enable leaders to legitimize their decisions to the public (Campbell, 2004, 94). Frames belong in a slow-burning context because they are developed over time in a context that privileges “cold” knowledge, through the notion of improving good science and best practice (Shwed and Bearman, 2010). While we know that expert consensus does not necessarily change the minds of those in power, frames are important for those seeking to legitimate their choices. Politicians, policymakers, and civil society actors can assert power through the ideas that are the content of frames, as well and use them to communicate to the public and coordinate with other policy elites.

The construction of frames can be understood in a variety of ways, including mapping controversies, establishing the composition of fields of experts, or following interest group preferences. Our approach to understanding how frames are generated is that they are developed through professional competition over what problems should be addressed, who is adequately tasked to deal with them, and how to harness resources and political attention to address them (Seabrooke and Tsingou, 2015, 2021).

The relationship between this behavior by professionals and slow-burning crises is an obvious one. Credible policymakers and leaders will find it difficult to legitimate programs without sufficient expert backing (Littoz-Monnet, 2020). EU structures make it difficult for European institutions to push too hard on areas that are seen as too close to each member state’s notion of the welfare state, or on issues, such as climate, that threaten entrenched interests and where transitions are costlier for some than for others. But when there are slow-burning issues, the creation of frames that can lead to a change in policy is vital; and frames should correspond to concerns over experience and expectations if they are to provide a basis for the legitimation of programs. The dominant framing of Europe’s crisis as one of public indebtedness and loss of competitiveness has not been sufficient in dealing with Europe’s fast-burning crisis issues, and has looked woefully inadequate in addressing the slow-burning ones.

Experience

The third cell is *experience*, combining *society* and *actualities*. The concern here is identifying what is happening on the ground in European society, including experiences of crisis in everyday life, such as the immediate needs of paying bills, accessing housing, or coping in a pandemic. The experience of acute economic crisis has been, or was, widely considered to be fundamentally contrary to the European project, which is inherently associated with peaceful prosperity. “Ordinary” people facing poverty, relying on charity for food, lacking shelter, bereft of work, or being denied access to adequate health coverage was seen by many as a shock to the European system and its values (Kaika, 2012; Kentikelenis, 2018a). It has reflected poorly on the leadership provided by European institutions and has undermined expectations about the plausibility, worth, and integrity of the European project. Experience within fast-burning crises leads to assessments of how the public perceive what is politically salient, what needs attention, and what issues have valence—those that are emotionally charged as necessary to deal with now. Fast-burning issues that have valence can act as rallying points for civil society to actively campaign to change programs and frames (Cox and Beland, 2013). Experience within fast-burning crises can also lead to lessons learned by authorities, with early pandemic management at the European Union level seen as decisive, despite uncertainty about its long-term effects on modes of governance (Ban, 2020; Schmidt, 2020b).

Changes in conditions for European society are easy to identify on a range of issues, including banking crises, cuts in public services from austerity measures, spikes in youth unemployment, financial stress in housing markets, and energy security. This also reflects a government’s capacity to rely on fiscal revenue or austerity style cuts, or, where permissible, exchange rate devaluation to stave off European institutions and the International Monetary Fund from knocking on their door (Moschella, 2016; Breen et al., 2020). The composition of the domestic political sphere adds further complexities in how they can respond (Walter, 2016). At a basic level, those who perceive that the EU cannot provide for them during a period of acute crisis are becoming more interested in their national identities, and rejecting the EU, with rejections more prevalent among lower-income groups (Polyakova and Fligstein, 2016; Dotti Sani and Magistro, 2016). Tracing such attitudes allows us to also connect how changes in *experience* are feeding *expectations* about who is to blame and why right-wing anti-EU parties are credible alternatives.

Expectations

Our final cell of *expectations* is where *society* and *narratives* intersect. The content of this cell is straightforward—that what the European public expect to happen has important ramifications for frames and programs from European institutions, and ultimately

changes experience. This includes what kinds of jobs they will have, where they can live, how many children they can house and afford (Bohle and Seabrooke, 2020), and if they can rely on the welfare state and on European institutions. Concerns about growing income inequality and diminishing intergenerational equity in Europe have been described as creating “scarring effects” among the young as their expected income and lifestyle fails to meet the standards of their parents’ generation, leading to changed political attitudes (Chauvel, 2010).

Changes in expectations are certainly occurring in European society and are part of “slow-burning” crises, whether they are about the future of work, the environmental crisis, or global migration movements (Kortendiek, 2021). Leaders could deal with these longer-term slow-burning issues if they were addressed in frames, but they have been too complex, too controversial, or too tied up into national competitiveness narratives. Without sufficient frames to address these issues, it is difficult to legitimate—or even cognitively prioritize—programs to fix them. And without doing that, the concern is that neglecting these issues will change experience so much that expectations about who can solve these issues will empower those who want to reject the European project outright. Civil society involvement from activists and experts can help address deflated expectations by directly engaging policymakers to change frames.

CASE IN POINT: DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES

Europe’s demographic challenge provides a case in point. Demographic change is not often in the limelight when it comes to understanding the types of crisis experienced by European authorities and societies. While occasional ominous headlines on “plummeting birth rates” attract some attention, the dynamics of what demographic shifts entail are not a popular crisis topic. Yet they matter for how we understand not only population trends, but also for how they affect economic, health, migration, and environmental parameters along timelines that don’t match political or business cycles (Vollset et al., 2020).

Within the European Union, competence in this broad field lies to a large extent with the member states, but there is much room for agency for the European Commission in this area too (Foverskov, 2020b). There is, however, no particular agency that is tasked with providing clear policies for the management of demographic changes in Europe. This issue exists in what can be described as a “policy vacuum,” where there are not sufficient political or scientific pressures pushing it onto an active agenda (Seabrooke et al., 2020). Agencies of the European Union also have a hard time dealing with this issue, because while the common challenges are clear, the treatment of demographic issues by member states varies widely. The European Commission (2012) noted in a key report on demographic issues that the “working age population” was declining, and this was an alarm to the sustainability of fiscal and pension systems, as well as pointing to lower and lower levels of fertility. When the European Commission (2015) followed up

by stating that to counterbalance a lower working-age population, productivity growth rates of 2 percent would have to compensate (double the then 1 percent), and that this had not been seen since 1995, timelines were put into sharper focus but no alarm bells rang. While we can see governance innovation, with a great deal of muddling through, on fast-burning crises like the asylum-seeker crisis of 2015–2016 (Kortendiek, 2021), a slow-burning fiscal and welfare crisis linked to demographic change has been harder to define, let alone address.

We can read this inability through the crisis diagnosis tools advocated above. Viewed through the combination of *authorities* and *actualities* we have the active programs from the European Commission on issues related to demography, but not demography itself. These include employment and social policy, as well as pensions (Hassel et al., 2019), recommending economic sustainability, but without a singular message. The political and identity-based sensitivities of the topic have led the European Commission to tip-toe around any particular advice while also frequently using the language of mobilization to alert their member states to the hazards ahead (Foverskov, 2020a).

Seeing the issue through an *authorities/narratives* lens, the lack of a clear program is due to the fact that the agencies of the European Union have not formed clear frames. Within the European Commission there have been tensions but no explicit struggles over demographic issues between Directorates-General. The DG ECFIN (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs) has viewed demographic issues through a focus on skills replication in the population and the need for market-based solutions to aging, such as extending retirement ages. The DG EMPL (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) framed demographic challenges as a real concern in the 2010s and called for policy interventions, including increased spending. Senior officials in the DG EMPL were reticent to ask for additional funding that would be seen as expenditure rather than investment, and feared mixing in migration issues (Seabrooke et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the DG ECFIN pursued a skills and innovation agenda that dominated, with the DG EMPL left without anyone really in charge of monitoring demographic change or proposing policy programs using frames with longer timelines such as employment, family, migration, or, indeed, climate.

While this is a story from authorities, the mix of *society* and *actualities* on demographic issues is creating a series of frustrations. Staying in the sphere of economics, these can be seen in issues such as unemployment and underemployment, especially for youth. They are also apparent in “everyday” frustrations such as access to adequate childcare and issues with appropriate housing. Recent research has shown how in many countries in Europe housing has become a financialized issue with an intergenerational impact, especially on those who cannot call on their parents for help (Bohle and Seabrooke, 2020). Housing is also a concern for those wishing to have children, with housing prices and the choice to have more than one child closely related (Flynn, 2020).

All of this informs *society/narratives* in the kind of expectations proclaimed by European citizens. This includes expectations about the safety of employment, autonomy over family formation, and the sustainability of pension systems given a rapidly

aging European population. Environmental concerns are also creating pressures. Given that forecasts from demographers show that demographic pressures in Europe will certainly lead to less generous welfare states without significant tax increases (Demeny, 2016), citizens' expectations of what authorities are doing to relieve demographic stresses will heighten as the perception of associated crises intensifies.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to think through a framework to assist us in understanding Europe's multiple crises. While it has been argued in the past that crises are normally good for the European project, the depth and number of crises in recent times has led to a hardened Europe rather than an emboldened one. To understand what is happening, and the available avenues for action, it is important to distinguish the elements of crisis and analytically separate them based on actors' experiences and timeline types. Crises differ in intensity, tempo, and rhythm. While most of the attention in past literature has been on rhythm, we can learn a great deal by focusing on the relationship between these elements.

We understand tempo by distinguishing fast-burning and slow-burning crises. Fast-burning crises are characterized by great intensity, explicit conflicts between actors on what to do, and the assertion of institutional authority or muscle. Slow-burning crises differ in being less intense in political and policy attention, relying more on expert consensus to establish policy frames, and felt more by the public in their everyday lives. Both fast- and slow-burning crises have important implications for the legitimacy and sustainability of the European project, the context for discussion here. We provide a framework based on programs, frames, experience, and expectations to analyze the relationships between European authorities and society in present actualities and their place in narratives of change. Our aim has not been to provide a model, but rather to offer some tools to help us make connections on what needs to be addressed by leaders, policymakers, experts, activists, and the public to support progressive social and economic policies. The broader fear here is that without making these connections explicit, the legitimacy of the European Union process will suffer further. This is especially the case if European institutions are perceived as uninterested in addressing tough and sensitive problems that are changing Europeans' experiences and expectations. We find that in order to understand types of crises we also need a more comprehensive connection to the timelines involved and an analysis of whose experiences of crisis is relevant, and when it is relevant. Crises are neither discrete nor neatly sequential. The increased focus on the climate crisis shows that the same set of issues can constitute a slow-burning crisis for some and a fast-burning crisis for others. How a crisis is understood in terms of its rhythm, but also its tempo and intensity, will have consequences for the policy tools used, the resources allocated, and the constituencies mobilized.

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CHAPTER 17

STUDYING TIME WITH QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

MARTINO MAGGETTI

THIS chapter discusses how temporality—time as an empirical dimension of variation (Bartolini, 1993)—can be fruitfully studied with qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). The discussion focuses on QCA as the main variant of set-theoretic methods (also known as configurational comparative methods; see Berg-Schlosser and Cronqvist, 2011; Ragin, 1987, 2000, 2008; Rihoux and Ragin, 2008; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012; Thiem and Dusa, 2012; Wagemann and Schneider, 2010). The argument, however, applies to all set-theoretic methods, with some qualifications. As QCA was originally designed for comparative cross-sectional studies, longitudinal applications have been for long considered the Achilles heel of this approach (see, for instance, De Meur, Rihoux, and Yamasaki, 2009; Gerrits and Pagliarin, 2020). However, recent methodological developments made QCA more suitable for the study of temporality (Meuer and Fiss, Forthcoming; Oana, Schneider, and Thomann, Forthcoming). In this chapter, I aim at showing how QCA can nowadays even be considered as an *asset* for the operationalization and the empirical study of the time dimension—at least for some specific operationalizations of it.

Set-theoretic methods such as QCA are grounded on the insight that systematic connections between phenomena or events can be analyzed as set relations (Ragin, 2000, 2008). These set relations unfold among a number of explanatory conditions and an outcome of interest. Cases, as empirical instances of the phenomena or events under investigation, are sorted in a truth table according to the configuration determined by the combination of conditions they exhibit and their connection to the outcome. Truth tables can be seen as the cornerstone of QCA analysis in both crisp set and fuzzy set applications: in the former, cases are ordered according to the presence or absence of conditions, while in the latter, a degree of membership in any given condition is attributed to each case. A minimization procedure is then applied to find the simplest

logically possible formula that is associated with the outcome.¹ Depending on the treatment of so-called logical reminders (referring to nonobserved cases), the complexity of the solution formula may vary. By these means, QCA enables a comparative analysis of subset and superset (causal) relations with respect to the outcome, whereby specific combinations of conditions may be found to be necessary and/or sufficient for the investigated outcome.

Against this background, there is a specific methodological limitation inherent in incorporating the time dimension in the standard QCA framework. Truth tables represent atemporal (or synchronic) configurations and, therefore, QCA solution formulas are typically presented as commutative combinations of conditions. This means that the order by which conditions are connected through logical AND or OR does not matter: “A or B” equates to “B or A”; and “A and B” equates to “B and A.” The underlying notion of conjunctural causality presupposes indeed that conditions jointly produce the outcome of interest; that is, that they typically correspond to INUS causes—insufficient but nonredundant parts of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the occurrence of the effect (Mackie, 1974). As Schneider and Wagemann (2012) noted, this insensitivity to the time dimension is highly problematic for a technique called “qualitative comparative analysis,” as a proper treatment of the time dimension is one of the main attributes—and a distinctive strength—of qualitative research.

Considering the order of things, sequences, timing, long-term processes, and temporal connections among events are indeed crucial to understanding political phenomena (Abbott, 2001; Büthe, 2002). The time dimension is also important for understanding how a political system works when it is understood as political time, that is, the institutionalized time-sensitiveness of polities, politics, and policies (Goetz, 2010; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009). As a matter of fact, “placing politics in time—systematically situating particular moments (including the present) in a temporal sequence of events and processes—can greatly enrich our understanding of complex social dynamics” (Pierson, 2000, 72). In some cases, temporal variations can be considered even more important than spatial variations for explaining differences between countries or regions, or differences among individuals of a target sample, groups, or populations (e.g., for explaining phenomena such as political attitudes and behavior) (Bartolini, 1993). Accounting for the time dimension is specifically essential for understanding both processes of persistence and change that occur in politics. On the one hand, many political phenomena exhibit a path-dependence trajectory stemming from self-reinforcing sequences of events (Pierson, 2004). On the other hand, institutions may evolve over time, transform, and change in a way that was unanticipated at the time of their creation (Thelen, 2000).

This chapter presents research strategies for the incorporation of *various conceptions* of the time dimension in the analytical moment of QCA: duration, sequences, tendency, and timing/time-sensitiveness. It will also discuss how time can be studied with a QCA-based mixed-method design, so as to obtain an in-depth understanding of a complex (causal) process unfolding over time.

TEMPORALITY AND QCA

This section deals with strategies to incorporate time within the mechanics of QCA, that is, *before* or *during* the so-called analytic moment.

Duration

The concept of *duration* refers to a common understating of temporality. Political scientists are frequently interested in the study of duration in the sense of a time span, referring to the amount of time from when something starts to when it ends, or from a given point to another point in time (Maggetti et al., 2012). It is possible to operationalize duration with QCA through *set calibration* (Oana et al., Forthcoming). Information on the time span—of specific political phenomena—can be factored in the creation of sets and the attribution of membership scores. For instance, when a researcher is interested in the age of individuals or organizations, a set “old age” can be calibrated, wherein the cases are adjusted according to the time elapsed since their date of birth or of creation (Maggetti, 2007). Following another example, democracy can be conceived as a stock, rather than a level (Gerring et al., 2005). This way, this condition can incorporate the concept of duration, as it represents a quantity that has been accumulated as it is measured at a specific point in time. It would then be possible to calibrate a set such as “high stock of democracy,” whose members would be countries ranked according to their cumulative experience with democracy.

In empirical QCA research, this solution is quite frequently applied, for instance in Ragin’s analysis of variations in pension systems (Ragin, 1994). In this study, it was expected that the year of establishment of a social security program could matter for explaining the type and size of welfare state measures. The duration of a program, in particular, increases its entrenchment within the political-administrative structures of the state, as well as its quantitative expansion and potential improvement over time. A condition operationalizing duration was thus created, where a high score indicates a “young social security program,” to be used as an explanatory condition for the aforementioned cross-country differences in pension systems as an outcome.

The advantages of this procedure lie in its simplicity and wide applicability. However, temporality is operationalized only implicitly and in a quite rough manner, which may or may not be appropriate, depending on the goal of the study (Thomann and Maggetti, 2017). What is more, it is important to bear in mind that the inclusion of additional conditions exacerbates the problem of limited diversity (Fischer and Maggetti, 2017). Such a problem corresponds to a situation where many logically possible configurations are not empirically observed, which in turn reduces the reliability of the minimization procedure leading to the solution formulas (Ragin and Sonnett, 2005).

Sequences

QCA can also be fruitfully applied to the study of *sequences* that unfold over time, that is, to ordered lists of events.² The empirical analysis of sequences requires operationalizing the dependence of an interval-measured sequence upon its own past (Abbott, 1995). As such, the notion of sequencing is central to causal analysis in the social sciences, whereby causal relations are usually considered as directed relations—causes precede their effects in time (Maggetti et al., 2012, 43). Sequencing also allows for a processual understanding of social phenomena, which are frequently composed of a series of phases that build upon each other; for instance, think about the policy cycle from agenda-setting to policy implementation, where each step affects the following one. The study of sequences is particularly challenging for set-theoretic methods, since, as mentioned earlier, conditions are commutative; that is, their ordering usually does not matter. There are nevertheless a number of possible solutions at hand.

Temporal QCA (TQCA) was introduced early on as a way to deal with criticisms about the static nature of QCA (Caren and Panofsky, 2005; see also Hak et al., 2013). TQCA proceeds in a quite straightforward way, that is, by introducing the idea of selective noncommutativity of combinations of conditions. As mentioned earlier, in standard QCA the combination of presence or absence of conditions A and B entails four possible configurations, corresponding to AB, Ab, aB, and ab (where, using the common notation, uppercase letters denote presence and lowercase letters denote absence). When the order of conditions is introduced, meaning that AB signifies “A then B” as opposed to “B then A,” another four configurations need to be considered (BA, Ba, bA, and ba). The example offered by Caren and Panofsky consists of a hypothetical dataset of 18 cases of unionization attempts by graduate student workers at universities. The chosen explanatory conditions are four: whether the unionization struggle takes place at a public or private university (PUBLIC); the presence of elite allies (ELITE); affiliation with a national union (AFFILIATE); and the occurrence of a strike or strike threat (STRIKE). The outcome is the achievement by the investigated unions of official recognition by the university (RECOGNITION). Their analysis shows that the ordering of conditions is indeed important and provides analytical leverage, for instance regarding the sequence of the conditions ELITE and AFFILIATION. Achieving recognition without a strike is only possible when graduate workers at public universities acquire elite support early and receive national affiliation afterward. Conversely, when elite support follows national affiliation, a strike or strike threat is necessary to achieve recognition. However, TQCA comes with some limitations. One of the major drawbacks is the drastic expansion of the number of possible configurations, notwithstanding the possibility of adopting so-called limitation strategies (Ragin and Strand, 2008). Another major disadvantage is that TQCA is essentially limited to crisp-set QCA. The empirical application of TQCA has thereby been rare.

When the time dimension is regarded in terms of causal chains, a coincidence analysis (CNA) framework can be used to systematize the sequencing of conditions (Baumgartner, 2013). This technique deserves special attention as it can be considered

the most formalized way of analyzing sequences with set-theoretic methods (Oana et al., Forthcoming). CNA does not minimize sufficient and necessary conditions using Quine-McCluskey optimization, but relies on an algorithm that does not require specifying an outcome condition and allows for any condition to be (in principle) the outcome of other conditions (Baumgartner, 2013). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that an equivalent procedure that can be transposed to standard QCA also exists (Duşa, 2018; Thiem, 2015). Such an analytical framework, based on the analysis of coincidences of the factors at work in a causal process, can directly operationalize sequences as temporal dependencies among conditions. An example reported by Oana, Schneider, and Thomann (Forthcoming, 171) identifies a number of factors that sequentially lead to “high life expectancy”: either an affluent health system, leading to good governance, leading again to high wealth, which, together with high-quality education, ultimately produces high life expectancy; or by the combination of the latter condition with not-high income inequality. At its best, coincidence analysis allows for uncovering the core causal structure underlying configurational statements. The analysis of causal chains thus constitutes an important innovation, which comes, however, at the expense of an increase in the complexity of the analysis; in particular, not specifying outcome conditions and allowing for multiple dependencies may create extremely complex causal structures, which might not be sustained by corresponding empirical observations. This technique also entails an increased sensitiveness to analytical choices (Oana et al., Forthcoming).

A third option is two-step QCA (Schneider, 2019). The main goal of two-step QCA is to split the set of conditions into two sets representing proximate and remote conditions and then run two consecutive analyses so as to reduce the problem of limited diversity. These two steps can be used to operationalize a sequence of two sets of events. Remote conditions analyzed in the first step could refer to the temporally distant conditions that are expected to be necessary for an outcome to occur. The second step can include temporally closer conditions that are deemed (jointly) sufficient for the same outcome. This is a neat and elegant procedure that is, however, helpful in specific situations only—that is, particularly when the phenomenon of interest is expected to result from a single sequence of two series of events that can be operationalized in the way presented earlier.

Tendency

Researchers that are interested in *tendencies* might find helpful time-series QCA (TS/QCA) (Hino, 2009). The notion of tendency refers to the examination of trajectories and movements in a given direction over time, which allows researchers to characterize the overall trend of the phenomena of interest and detect the presence of deviations or anomalies (Maggetti et al., 2012). Instead of focusing on sequences as TQCA does, TS/QCA examines the variations of conditions between given time points as causes of the outcome. Hino (2009) shows that TS/QCA can be operationalized with different procedures and specifically with so-called time differencing QCA. Accordingly, the difference between two given time points within the same spatial unit is identified

and new values are assigned based on the generated difference. These values can be dichotomized, for example, “increase” and “decrease,” resulting in a matrix of “time differenced” data, which constitutes a valuable innovation. However, TS/QCA entails an expansion of the number of possible cases as compared with the usual cross-sectional QCA strategy, as the numerous time points are multiplied with the spatial units under investigations (e.g., countries). What is more, TS/QCA is mostly applicable to crisp-set QCA, even though an extension to fuzzy-set analysis seems possible (but has not been developed yet).

Timing and Time-Sensitiveness

“Timing” and “time-sensitiveness” are expressions used to denote the position or the spacing of events in time. Focusing on timing and time-sensitiveness means examining the implications of phenomena unfolding at specific points in time. This perspective is pertinent for the study of certain phenomena for which a particular point or period of time matters, for instance those implying a change of state or a transition from one state to another (Maggetti et al., 2012).

To investigate the role of timing and time-sensitiveness, it is possible to run a separate QCA for each point in time and then execute a comparative inspection of the solutions (Fischer and Maggetti, 2017). This simple procedure is particularly helpful when data are available for a small to medium number of points in time, as for panel analysis. Some conditions are likely to remain constant across the models, while others may vary. The comparative inspection of the solutions referring to each point in time allows the researcher to identify regular patterns leading to the outcome of interest that might emerge over time. The analysis of the similarities and differences across the solutions provides evidence about the time consistency of the explanatory model and about possible biases (Maggetti and Levi-Faur, 2013). Conditions that hold explanatory power over time can be considered as core conditions, while conditions that are contingent on specific segments can be regarded as peripheral (Fiss, 2011). This approach is relevant when the analytical goal is to find a set of explanatory factors that are stable for a certain period, or, on the contrary, to discriminate between periods that are characterized by different explanatory factors. The main limitations are the availability of longitudinal data for all the conditions and the difficulty of examining a large number of points in time.

Other (less common) strategies are possible, for example the analysis of configurations over time using so-called lagged time windows (Aversa et al., 2015; Fainshmidt et al., 2017; Meuer and Rupietta, 2015). In its simplest variant, this approach implies conducting a lagged QCA analysis (e.g., with a one-year lag) to investigate whether a given set of conditions that occur at t_0 are associated with the outcome at t_1 . Such an analysis cannot detect the impact of changes, but it allows for accounting for the fact that conditions may require a certain amount of time to produce an effect. Another quite simple procedure involves the case-oriented calibration of change patterns (Ragin,

2014). This means that change patterns can be identified in the conditions of interest and calibrated accordingly. For instance, cases can be calibrated: in the set of events that occurred after or before a certain date; in the set of phenomena that were very quick; or in the set of phenomena that lasted very long (Fischer and Maggetti, 2017). The inclusion of temporality in crisp or fuzzy sets is also possible by introducing some quality of time into new conditions. For example, we can add a condition to assess the membership of different countries in the set of “quick economic growth after democratization.” Such an approach only applies when it is possible to identify meaningful time patterns, which are not too numerous, not to produce a too complex model. Finally, set coincidence can be used to easily measure how sets or truth tables change over time (Rubinson and Mueller, 2016). This consists of systematically comparing the degree of similarity of configurations that occur at different periods of time. However, this is mostly a merely descriptive tool.

TEMPORALITY AND QCA-BASED MIXED DESIGNS

This section deals with the incorporation of time in a QCA-based analytical strategy *after* the analytical moment. This implies the use of a mixed design, more specifically a research strategy combining QCA with case study techniques in a coherent analytical framework (Maggetti, 2018).

Such mixed designs allow researchers to acquire an in-depth understanding of a complex causal process. The procedure of choice consists of engaging in process tracing after QCA so as to understand how the conditions leading to the outcome of interest are temporally ordered or temporally determined. More specifically, this procedure aims at detecting the complex sequences structuring the underlying causal mechanisms (Beach and Rohlfing, 2018; Williams and Gemperle, 2017). The first step is running a standard QCA with the usual cross-sectional comparative design. As a follow-up, one or more cases need to be selected for further examination. The general principles of case selection after a QCA have been formally laid out by Schneider and Rohlfing in a series of contributions (Rohlfing and Schneider, 2013; Schneider and Rohlfing, 2013; Schneider, 2016). In a nutshell, cases providing analytical leverage are those labeled as typical or deviant ones. Typical (positive) cases are those that are strongly consistent with the set-theoretic relationship of interest, that is, those with full membership in both the necessary condition and in the outcome or, respectively, those that are members of (one or more) solution terms strongly consistent with a statement of sufficiency with the outcome. Conversely, the most pertinent deviant cases are those epitomizing strong unexpected inconsistencies, namely, above all, those for which the outcome is observed even when the necessary condition is absent, or, with respect to sufficiency, those that are full members of the solution term but are not members of the outcome.

It could be argued that the baseline choice for discerning the sequences of conditions should be the typical case—that is, a case that is very well explained by the model—is representative of the cross-case causal relationship under investigation and can provide insights on the underlying mechanisms at work. At the same time, the analysis of deviant cases—that is, cases that are poorly explained by the model—could also be helpful to identify theoretical anomalies and the potential weaknesses of the explanatory model (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). Deviant case analysis ideally results in new explanatory factors, which, when focusing on the time dimension, might relate to the causal relevance of the ordering or the timing of events. In other terms, a case might appear as deviant because the previous cross-sectional QCA failed to recognize the causal role of temporality.

Then, a process tracing can be performed on such analytically relevant cases (Beach, 2018; Schneider and Rohlfing, 2013). When the researcher has a special interest in the time dimension, she can use process tracing with the specific aim of determining the sequencing of conditions within given configurations leading to the aforementioned typical or deviant cases. In this case, process tracing can be used not only to ascertain causal mechanisms understood as micro-level patterns of behavior but also, and above all, to understand how the temporal ordering of conditions is—or is not—causally related to the outcome. This implies distinguishing between synchronic and diachronic relationships among the individual conditions composing solution terms. Process tracing can therefore allow researchers to discover that, for instance, a solution term appearing as a commutative combination of terms AbC leading to the outcome of interest might rather have an underlying causal structure as follows: A then (bC) .

Williams and Gemperle (2017) offer an example of such reasoning. They argue that for political parties, the combination of proclaimed ownership over economic issues (O) and the occurrence of an economic crisis (C) leads to electoral success (S). However, they expect that the impact of the combination of these conditions needs to be understood sequentially: only parties for which economy was considered as a key field of competence before the economic crisis are expected to increase their electoral shares, while parties that reoriented their agenda toward the economy only after the crisis will not. The former corresponds to the proposition O then $C \rightarrow S$ as opposed to C then $O \rightarrow$ not S . Process tracing allows for examining temporal sequences confirming (or disconfirming) these expectations.

To conclude, a few limitations of these mixed-method designs can be mentioned. QCA and case study approaches lie on compatible ontological and epistemological assumptions and can therefore be combined under a unified analytical framework (Maggetti, 2018). However, a first remaining limitation is about the need for testing again the insights gained by case study on the larger population of cases to be able to confirm more general statements about the processes under investigation; according to a nested analysis perspective, a follow-up QCA including these new insights (e.g., alternative cases, new conditions, or different calibration threshold) would be ideally warranted (Lieberman, 2005). The second limitation is more practical and relates to the time and effort required by operationalizing, collecting data, and applying different methods, as well as the difficulty of condensing a composite research design within the word limits required by most journals.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Contemporary set-theoretic methods, such as QCA, provide powerful tools for the analysis of the time dimension. Each tool should be selected in accordance with the underlying conceptualization of time and by considering its distinctive advantages and limitations (see Table 17.1). As such, a number of trade-offs exist. For instance, incorporating the time dimension through set calibration is a straightforward but indirect way to deal with a specific understanding of temporality, for example the duration of a phenomenon or event. The systematic study of causal chains is a powerful way to account for the causal impact of sequences of conditions, but it comes at the expense of the complexity of the analysis and might be unfeasible depending on the number of observed configurations. Running and comparing separate QCAs for each point in time may be useful to detect the role of time-sensitiveness especially when the analysis centers on few occurrences of longitudinal variation.

Table 17.1 Summary of Research Strategies

Concept	Tool	Main Features	Advantages and Limitations
Duration	Set calibration	Information on the time span of political phenomena can be factored in the creation of sets and the attribution of membership scores	- This procedure is simple and widely applicable - However, temporality is operationalized only implicitly, and the inclusion of additional conditions exacerbates the problem of limited diversity
Sequences	Temporal QCA (TQCA)	The idea of selective noncommutativity of combinations of conditions is introduced	- Quite straightforward - One of the major drawbacks is the drastic expansion of the number of possible configurations; it is also limited to crisp-set QCA
	Causal chains	Sequences are directly operationalized as temporal dependencies among conditions through the analysis of coincidences	- It allows for uncovering the causal structure underlying configurational statements - It may create extremely complex causal structures; this technique also entails an increased sensitiveness to analytical choices
	Two-step QCA	Conditions are split into two sets representing proximate and remote conditions and then two consecutive analyses are executed	- Neat procedure - Helpful in specific situations only

(continued)

Table 17.1 Continued

Concept	Tool	Main Features	Advantages and Limitations
Tendency	Time-series QCA (TS/QCA)	The variation of conditions between given time points as causes of the outcome is examined	- Provides time-differenced data - The number of possible cases is expanded; mostly applicable to crisp-set QCA
Timing/time-sensitiveness	QCA for each point in time	A separate QCA is executed for each point in time and then the solutions are inspected comparatively	- Clear and technically simple - The main limitations are the availability of longitudinal data for all the conditions and the difficulty of examining a large number of points in time
	Analysis of configurations over time	A lagged QCA analysis is conducted to investigate whether conditions that occur at t0 are associated with the outcome at t1	- Easy to operationalize - It cannot detect the impact of change
	Case-oriented calibration of change patterns	Change patterns can be identified in the conditions of interest and calibrated accordingly	- Easy to operationalize - It only applies when it is possible to identify a limited number of meaningful time patterns
	Set coincidence	Set coincidence is applied to measure how sets or truth tables change over	- Simple and intuitive - It is mostly a descriptive tool
Complex process	Process tracing after QCA	A process-tracing-oriented case study is applied after standard QCA	- It allows an in-depth understanding of causal processes over time - It requires time and effort for operationalizing, collecting data, and applying different methods

To conclude, it is worth remembering that different approaches to QCA coexist—more or less peacefully—and are applied in empirical research (Thomann and Maggetti, 2017). While there are no absolute restrictions, it is worth recognizing that some tools are more aligned with some approaches, while others are more adequate for other approaches. For instance, process tracing after QCA is specifically fitting in case-oriented approaches, while it is more difficult to reconcile it with conditions-oriented applications. Conversely, TQCA and TS/QCA are in tune with the latter type of approach. Furthermore, the analysis of causal chains is specifically suitable when a redundancy-free approach is adopted, while the application of a separate QCA for each point works at best when a substantive interpretability approach is chosen.

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NOTES

1. QCA relies on the Quine-McCluskey algorithm for the minimization procedures, while other applications such as CNA use dedicated algorithms.
2. Finite sequences that are typically studied by social scientists are sometimes known as “strings.”

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PART III

TIME AND
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

CHAPTER 18

TIME IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

ANDREW R. HOM

TIME occupies a strange position in International Relations (IR). Temporal phenomena like epochal power shifts, chaotic wars, and a steady diet of surprising and confounding events run through the international political record. But for much of its disciplinary history, IR did not take time especially seriously, either as an object of analysis or an assumption or embedded logic informing various theoretical perspectives. Over the past decade or more, things have changed. Mainstream approaches to institutions and statistics have made room for historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2004; Hanrieder, 2015; Fioretos, 2017) and Bayesian methods (King and Zeng, 2001; Western and Kleykamp, 2004; Park, 2010), and there has been a veritable explosion of time studies on the broadly critical side of IR. Overall, IR is becoming more and more aware of its intimate relationship with time.

However, none of this recent time scholarship develops a synoptic account of *IR theory* (IRT). Kimberly Hutchings's (2007, 2008) touchstone work includes some IRT as part of her analysis of how *international political theories* instantiate the classical temporalities of homogeneous *chronos* and opportunistic *kairos*.¹ Tim Stevens (2015) develops a general framework of "emergent sociotemporality" from the celebrated time scholar J. T. Fraser, but applies this specifically to cybersecurity. Christopher McIntosh (2015) highlights mainstream security studies as "theories of the present," and a host of other scholars bring distinctive temporal perspectives to bear on particular debates, topics, and empirical phenomena (Berenskoetter, 2011; Blaney and Inayatullah, 2006; Debrix, 2015; Edkins, 2003, 2013; Gallagher, 2012; Helliwell and Hindess, 2011; Hindess, 2007; Hom, 2010, 2017b; Hom and Steele, 2010; Klinke, 2013; Lundborg, 2016; Shapiro, 2001, 2010, 2016; Stephens, 2010; Vij, 2012). However, none of them pursues a holistic perspective on the question of time in IRT.²

This chapter develops such a view by scrutinizing time in various IR theories. I argue that, while most do not acknowledge this explicitly, IR theories are deeply bound up with issues of time and temporality. In particular, we can distinguish and understand

them by examining whether they take a more *open* or more *closed* view of time and how this view impacts their substantive accounts. Put briefly, more open accounts understand time “as fundamentally indeterminate, constituted from contingency and novelty, and as such resistant to any moves that might close down future possibilities in the interest of ideological mobilization, hermeneutical assistance, or theoretical affect” (Hom and Steele, 2010, 274). By contrast, closed temporalities constrain time using intuitive, often spatial metaphors, which lend a sense of order, manageability, and predictability to complex and interpenetrating social processes that are often quite contingent (Hom and Steele, 2010, 274). Two familiar variants of closed time are unilinear-progressive and cyclical accounts (e.g., see Walker, 1993), which posit either the consistent march of progress or a sort of “eternal permutational” recurrence to knit together the past, present, and future in a meaningful and well-ordered continuum.

This distinction does not exhaust ideas about time and international politics. I deploy it in ideal-typical fashion, as a “deliberate reduction” or “one-sided accentuation” of perspectives that gathers together and draws out some of the dominant intentions and tensions animating IRT (Jackson, in Hom, 2017a, 700; Jackson, 2017). Its value lies in “intellectual utility” rather than “descriptive accuracy”—the open/closed distinction should be “spare enough to be useful but rich enough to allow its extension” to central examples of each theory (Jackson, 2017). Indeed, in addition to picking out key differences *between* various IR theories, I show that the question of open/closed time also informs individual tradition’s *internal* debates and developments.³ I cover IR realism, liberalism, constructivism, English School, feminism, Marxism, and critical theory. Each section notes key temporal distinctions across and within the theoretical tradition. This helps avoid treating each -ism as a monolith and allows us to develop a more nuanced account highlighting “complex arrangements with internal differentiations and fuzzy boundaries that nevertheless produce an identifiable ‘pattern’” of thought we have since come to know as one -ism or another (Kessler and Steele, 2017, 11). In the conclusion, I discuss the emerging contours of recent and more explicit engagements with time and reflect on the implications of this temporal typology for the broader question of how we can reinterpret IRT as an intrinsically temporal domain of inquiry.

REALISM

Realism in IR initially differentiated itself against the postwar American trend toward a unified view of science. International politics was distinct and distinctly unrational, primarily due to the workings of power under anarchy. Hopes that war and other dilemmas would submit to general knowledge or a naturally harmonious solution were dangerously “idealized” (Carr, 2016, 12–14; Herz, 1950, 1959; Morgenthau, 1946). Instead, politics *always* involves an irreducible clash of perspectives and commitments, which can only be addressed in their concrete particularity (Morgenthau, 1945, 1948; Niebuhr,

2008). These realist positions were closely attuned to the issue of time. Early or “classical” realists admonished claims about social prediction and control underwritten by the idea that enlightened reason reliably replaced the theological foundations of society. Instead, realists acknowledged contingency, the unknown, and multiple worldviews as basic features of life “under an empty sky from which the Gods have departed” (Morgenthau, 1948; Hom and Steele, 2010, 274, 279; Guilhot, 2017, 99–107). Classical realist time was fundamentally open, “elastic and incommensurable with itself” (Guilhot, 2017, 19).⁴

International Relations theory must address open time with nuanced and dynamic concepts. Morgenthau’s “struggle for power” expressed the existential need to temporarily fix fluid situations so as to understand and act on them (Petersen, 1999; Hom and Steele, 2010; Rösch, 2016). The balance of power referred to ongoing efforts to delimit competition and thereby forestall another world war (Guilhot, 2017, 91–99). And the security dilemma (Herz, 1950) typified realism’s “tragic vision” (Lebow, 2003) of politics in time, elaborating how nonbelligerent states in uncertainty might descend into arms races and unintended wars.

However, while they decried rationalism and embraced open time, classical realists also occasionally promised a “scientific” IR theory concerned with “general laws” (see the transcript in Guilhot, 2011, 240–253; Wolfers, 2011, 282–283; also Guilhot, 2017, 54–56, 40). While such comments were more an apology to the fashions of the day than a deep commitment to nomothetic theorizing (Williams, 2005a, 82–127; Guilhot, 2017, 28–68), they nevertheless afforded an opportunity to distill a more rationalist version of realism. “Neorealists” welded classical realist sensibilities to an economic mode of theorizing. For instance, Kenneth Waltz (1959) argued that a properly scientific and parsimonious IRT should look only at international or systemic causes. In particular, structural factors like anarchy and power differentials could explain the most important political outcomes once these had been abstracted from the “reality of international practice” (Waltz, 1979, 68).

These explanatory commitments required modifications of classical concepts. Anarchy moved from the absence of world government to a systemic organizing principle granting structure to relations between states, which were “black-boxed” as functionally identical and strategically rational entities analogous to firms. Power shifted from an epistemic capacity to the more readily measured material strength. Instead of a dynamic holding operation, the balance of power became a cycling regularity or equilibrium imbuing the international historical record with a reliable shape (Waltz, 1979; see Hom and Steele, 2010, 275–276).

In these ways, neorealists propounded a powerful and closed vision of time as an orderly continuum of “continuities and repetitions” that “*defeat*” woolly theorizing and normative aspirations alike (Waltz, 1979, 67, emphasis added). The lynchpin was reducing the possibilities of uncertainty (a *prima facie* open view of the future) to a singular rational response: states “worry” about relative gains and losses more than anything else (Waltz, 1979, 105; see Hom and Steele, 2010, 275), and the aggregate effects of such worry produce relatively stable equilibria. In this sense, neorealism “rejects the flow of time altogether,” producing “a uniformity of outcomes despite the variety

of inputs’” (Hom and Steele, 2010, 275). This temporal closure helped quell Cold War thermonuclear anxieties. While classical realists despaired that the nuclear revolution made a world state normatively necessary and practically implausible (see Craig, 2003; Scheuerman, 2010), Waltz (1981) argued in the other direction: because states were rational and nuclear weapons made wars too costly, “more may be better” because they would cultivate more cautious behaviors.⁵

Even sympathetic scholars find neorealism too puristic. Neoclassical realists therefore bring individual- and unit-level considerations back in, using insights from psychology, bureaucratic and organizational studies, state-society, and domestic institutions (Ripsman et al., 2016, 59) to construct “intervening variables” that can explain empirical variations in foreign policy (Ripsman et al., 2016, 58–79, ix). Yet while these efforts relax neorealism’s explanatory standards, they do so only to wear down the novelty of unexpected events (see Mead, 2002, 43), filling in the gaps of grand theory with scientifically warranted explanations. Time opens up just enough to allow scientific truth through.

Against these scientific renderings, more recent “reflexive” readings of realism seek to recover its distinctive ethical (e.g., Cozette, 2008) and open temporal sensibilities (see Hom and Steele, 2010). Temporal variation inflects the meaning and implications of every political dilemma and research puzzle. It drives “ontological doubt,” requiring “*constant* engagement with empirical reality” (Stullerova, 2017, 13). Responding primarily to a disastrous decade or more of counterterror wars in which some IR accounts were complicit, reflexive realists highlight the cross-contamination between research and political practice and draw from this stark lessons about scholarly reflexivity (Lebow, 2003, 310–359; Williams 2005b; Steele, 2007a; Amoureux, 2015). The social and political nature of social science means that concepts and theories can never be safe from the vicissitudes of open time, and so we rely on the “tragic self-denial” of the politician *and* the theorist: “In a world without foundations, the heroically responsible individual is one who overcomes the desire for such foundations” (Williams, 2005a, 195). The result is a more prudent vision of IRT bound by an ethical responsibility to reflect on the limits of knowledge, its relationship to politics unfolding in open time, and how both recommend a “politics of limits” that “maximises its positive possibilities while minimising its destructive potential” (Williams, 2005a, 7, 69–114).

However, reflexive realism is not immune to temporal tensions. In the process of recovering ethics, some reflexive realists read open time in an Augustinian sense, as the secular ground of humanity’s “existential reach for transcendence” still located “under” the moral promise of God (Russell, 1990, 157; see Hom and Steele, 2010, 284). Other, more Nietzschean realists understand time itself as “devoid not only of worldly meaning but of any transcendental foundation” (Hom and Steele, 2010, 280–284). This temporal distinction informs dialogues about the national interest (Williams, 2005b; Tjalve, 2008; see Hom, 2018c), humanitarian intervention (cf. Russell, 1990, 169; Murray, 1997, 124; Lang, 2002, 11–18; see Hom and Steele, 2010, 293–296), and whether IRT can ever move beyond a “series of informed hunches” (Morgenthau, quoted in Guilhot, 2011, 255). The issue of open/closed time shades each of these reflexive discussions, just as it does with major variations within realism more generally.

LIBERALISM

Liberal IR theory presents more consistently closed temporal visions. This is not especially surprising, since liberal IR springs from two quintessentially modern efforts to tame the vagaries of time after the death of god: liberal democracy and science.⁶ Liberalism confronts realism's insistence on power political necessities with arguments about the conditions for cooperation under anarchy (Doyle, 1983, 206). This marks an explanatory opening (Hom and Steele, 2010, 274–278): instead of recurrent conflict, “liberals cultivate firmly linear and sometimes unidirectional conceptions of history” (Jørgensen, 2017, 67) based on a harmony of interests, a simple “‘belief in progress’” (Sterling-Folker, 2015, 41), and/or a “hegemonic faith in the ‘Kantian triangle’” of democracy, capitalism, and international institutions (Sterling-Folker, 2016, 255).

Differences within liberalism's overarching progressivism reflect temporal distinctions. Early on in IR, “Schumpeterian pacifism” attended only to economic factors and so presented international politics as “homogenized. . . [A]ll states evolve toward free trade and liberty together” (Doyle, 1986, 1153–1154). Complex interdependence complicated the picture, proffering a manifold of links between states, economies, and societies as drivers of cooperation (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Richardson, 2008, 223). Neoliberal institutionalists treat states as rational actors and argue that in some cases institutions reduce uncertainty and thereby steer outcomes away from conflict (Martin and Simmons, 1998, 730–731; Keohane and Martin, 1995, 50; see Stein, 2008, 217; Richardson, 2008, 229–231). In the latter case, although research originally was circumspect about institutional effects, it gradually embraced a sense of almost inevitable cooperation, either as a matter of “integration” driven by rewards and attitudinal changes or interpretations of institutions as “efficient or efficiency-improving” regimes (Martin and Simmons, 1998, 735–739; see Keohane, 2005). Alongside these, absolute gains offered neoliberals a consistent “micro-vision of temporal progress in which rational actors ‘learn’ to improve their collective lot by cooperating under conditions of anarchy” (Hom and Steele, 2010, 276; see Baldwin, 1993, 4–8). Such seemingly robust causal mechanisms make an institution seem like an action framework that “‘will usually determine for itself’ what is the best possible state of affairs” (Richardson, 2008, 226). These shifts imbued institutional research with unilinear-progressive trajectories.⁷

Partly due to dissatisfaction with these rationalist approaches, institutional research recently took a historical turn (Martin and Simmons, 1998, 749–750; see Pierson, 2004; Fioretos, 2011, 2017; Hanrieder, 2015). Historical institutions change (Stein, 2008, 215) and often confound equilibrium assumptions or rational expectations. These acknowledgments place them on more open temporal ground, but historical institutionalists also struggle with this terrain. “Historical” signifies a range of nonrational or suboptimal outcomes caused by the flow of time, including unpredictability, inflexibility, “nonergodicity,” inefficiencies (Fioretos, 2011, 371), and “pathologies” that keep outcomes suboptimal (Martin and Simmons, 1998, 749; see Pierson, 2004). A key takeaway is that IR scholars should “attempt to specify the conditions under

which unanticipated consequences are most likely” (Martin and Simmons, 1998, 750). In these ways, historical institutionalists position temporal elements and dynamics as impediments to institutional rationality and social scientific knowledge warrants.

Democratic peace theory (DPT) closes down time even more decisively. It weds a seemingly robust empirical observation—the correlation between increasing numbers of liberal democracies and the decreasing frequency of war (see Russett, 1993)—with explanatory claims about how democratic culture, electoral consequences, and deliberative institutions pacify political behavior (e.g., Owen, 1994; Doyle, 1986, 1151). Although it has come under fire for its definitions of war and democracy (Spiro, 1994, 55–62), for its facile and cozy relationship with US foreign policy (Oren, 2003), and for ignoring the perils of democratization (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995), DPT also captured the imagination of scholars who viewed it “as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations” (Levy, 1989, 88). In DPT, rationalist social science confirms that the *natural* order of politics reflects liberal normative inclinations about the links between democracy and security. It marks an apotheosis of liberal IR, providing settled interpretations of events that confirm given normative positions. There is little wiggle room on its unirectilinear path to progress (Hom and Steele, 2010, 277). Such temporal certitude helped authorize post–Cold War interventions—most notably the Iraq fiasco (see Russett, 2005; Steele, 2007b; Ish-Shalom, 2013), where DPT’s promise to transcend time induced chaos out of relative stability.

Finally, “liberal international order” (LIO; Ikenberry, 2001, 2011) research offers a slightly more flexible temporality than DPT. Liberal international order relaxes the empirical record, admitting that liberalism contains intrinsic tensions, is currently in crisis, and not for the first time—“liberal internationalism, 3.0” (Ikenberry, 2009). And while it remains entirely rationalist, it also acknowledges that liberal order flows not from fixed principles (Ikenberry, 2009) but instead from “imaginative and supple responses to a changed global environment” (Simpson, 2008, 256). Thus, LIO seems a more dynamic and contingent liberalism. However, normative foreclosure delimits these openings. The current LIO faces an “authority crisis” but its underlying logic and character remains sound (Ikenberry et al., 2018, 2; Moravcsik, 2008, 247) and “there is simply no grand ideological alternative” (Ikenberry 2018, 23)—a conclusion asserted rather than historically or comparatively defended. These normative and temporal closures aid policy relevance by framing LIO as an issue primarily of execution rather than of political deliberation and indeed politics *per se*. Liberal international order scholars write about, write for, and move among the US foreign policy establishment (Brown, 2016, 46), a disciplinary context reflected in their nuanced theoretical embrace of American leadership and exceptionalism (Richardson, 2008, 231; Lebow, 2016, 59) and more coarse treatment of other possible ordering forms. Just as the LIO remains unsurpassed, so to, on this account, the United States remains a “liberal leviathan” exemplifying, driving, and directing political progress (Ikenberry, 2011, 2018, 13). In these ways, LIO recapitulates a unilinear and triumphalist vision of time that denies any radical alternatives or incommensurable differences (Levine and Barder, 2014, 876–879).

No IR theory typifies the relentless impulse to discipline open time like liberalism. Its complementary normative and scientific certitudes discourage any enduring “sense of indeterminacy” (Williams, 2005a, 123). Indeed, liberal IR offers the “end of history” (Fukuyama, 2006) or more precisely the decisive closure of time itself: “rational desire” mediated through liberal democracy drives events along a single arc toward “the best possible solution to the human problem” (Sterling-Folker, 2016, 256), even if this guaranteed outcome remains always just over the horizon.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist IR initially differentiated itself against neorealist and rationalist orthodoxies. Using a variety of philosophical resources, early constructivists attacked conventional IR wisdom about nomothetic theorizing and the cumulative nature of social scientific knowledge (Kratochwil, 1989, 1993; Onuf, 2012). They also moved IRT toward a more open view of time by challenging the importance of empirical regularities and the presumed immutability of the anarchic states system (Ruggie, 1986; Wendt, 1992) and by arguing that practical processes, shared understandings, and the coconstitution of agents and structures (Onuf, 1998, 59, 63–64) all destabilized the ground of grand theory. International relations unfolded in “a world of our making” (Onuf, 2012), which emerged from contingent historical processes,⁸ embedded prevailing ideological commitments, and always featured continuity *and* transformation (Kratochwil, 1986; Ruggie, 1982, 1986, 1998; Wendt, 1992). Such arguments received support from the surprising—and surprisingly peaceful—end of the Cold War. A vital lesson that IR scholars drew from this episode was that overly scientific approaches too easily forgot that time is a “force” that “in and of itself . . . shapes events” (Gaddis, 1992, 39). Time was wilder and less bounded than dominant theories realized, an oversight that left them wide open to the “embarrassment of changes” (Kratochwil, 1993, 71; see Leira and de Carvalho, 2017, 100). To understand how politics actually works in time, constructivists argue, we must foreground meaning and interpretation (especially identities and norms) over strategic necessities, and historical particularity over transhistorical validity; open up causal inference to constitutive factors; and generally treat dynamic phenomena not as impediments to scientific knowledge but the basic “stuff” of social life.

Constructivists working in the late 1980s and early 1990s were remarkably successful in their efforts to open up IR to ideas, processes, and a more flexible relationship to time (Guzzini, 2000). In a matter of years, constructivism joined realism, liberalism, and Marxism as a “paradigmatic” approach. But this success also introduced constructivism to the disciplinary politics of accommodation. To seize the initiative for norms and ideas, a “second generation” of constructivists offered a “middle ground” (Adler, 1997) or “*via media*” (Wendt, 2000) between rationality and culture, materialism and idealism, structure and agency, objectivism and subjectivism.⁹ The latter of each of these pairs could yet be translated into “the language of science,” especially as hypotheses about

the liberalizing influence of ideas on the international system (Leira and de Carvalho, 2017, 105; Kessler and Steele, 2017, 8). Norms could be operationalized as variables amenable to empirical “tests” against more rationalist explanations (Katzenstein, 1996, 30; Jepperson et al., 1996).¹⁰

These translations rendered constructivism less threatening to mainstream IR commitments. Social construction qualified but did not undercut the IR knowledge project. Having lost their back-and-forth mediating capacity between agents and structures, ideas and norms began to look much more like top-down, almost structural causal mechanisms (Engelkamp et al., 2017, 55). Their dynamism became unidirectional and positive, encouraging peaceful security communities (Risse-Kappen, 1996) and “cascading” from system to states and beneath in an increasingly regulatory manner (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, 891) that set durable expectations and taboos of behavior (Price, 1997; Tannenwald, 1999). Previously fluid and contingent identities were disciplined by the “spontaneous” capacity of “structural boundary conditions” to “channel . . . system dynamics” toward “inevitable” outcomes like a “world state” (Wendt, 2003, 491–492, 507–517; see Hom and Steele, 2010, 277–278). Much like liberal IRT, these explanatory closures reinforced the liberal *zeitgeist* of the post-Cold War decade (Steele, 2007b; Leira and de Carvalho, 2017; Kessler and Steele, 2017; Barder and Levine, 2012): because international politics had come into line with IR’s broad normative commitments, conventional hypothesis testing of new ideational variables was sufficient to show that (liberal) ideas could overcome power politics. As fluid phenomena became reliable top-down mechanisms, open time looked more and more like the steady march of progress toward justice or, at least, a growing list of liberal gains.¹¹ While early constructivists admonished IR’s historical amnesia, the second generation embraced historicism, forgetting that the end of the Cold War highlighted the indeterminate and unpredictable flow of time and reading it instead as a historical event of fixed meaning to be explained with tried and trusty methods.

Of course, even while top-down and linear-progressive readings of constructivism were securing a place in mainstream IRT, failed interventions, genocide and ethnic cleansing, and the war on terror confounded many of their hopes and premises. Consequently, a “third generation” of constructivists emerged who explicitly tried to recover the openness and critical commitments of the first generation. These constructivists embraced autobiographical narratives (Steele, 2005, 2008; Mitzen, 2006) and relational processes (Jackson and Nexon, 1999) and practices (McCourt, 2016). They insisted that “social science research cannot be neutral” and is in fact intrinsically political (Engelkamp et al., 2017, 52), especially since its subjects and objects cross-contaminate (Oren, 2003; Steele, 2007b), with ideas changing and “traveling” in unexpected ways. They also began acknowledging and engaging their own normative commitments as intrinsic and inescapably contingent elements of theorizing that entail greater scholarly reflexivity (Amoureux, 2015; Amoureux and Steele, 2015; Ish-Shalom, in Hom, 2017a, 710–714).

By reopening the settled epistemic and normative assumptions of *via media* constructivism, third-generation constructivists engage rather than discipline open time.

They happily study fluid, ungeneralizable, and nonrecurrent phenomena with qualitative and nonpositivist methods. Because we cannot know how time will unfold or how it will inflect ideas and norms, a “non-reflexive constructivism, i.e. one that does not observe its own context, its own limits . . . is a contradiction in terms” (Kessler and Steele, 2017, 9). If there is any “lesson” of the 1990s and early 2000s, this third generation argues, it is that international politics and IRT both exist in an open temporal continuum that cannot be theorized away without risking further embarrassments of changes.

ENGLISH SCHOOL THEORY

The English School (ES) also originally differentiated itself from realism and rationalism (see Navari, 2009b, 39–40; Bull, 1966; Wight, 1966). Even under conditions of anarchy, an international society exists and restrains state behavior (Bull, 2002; Watson, 1992; Wight, 2002). This was a crucial normative check on the supposed inescapability of naked power politics. It was also an explanatory breakthrough. Lacking a sovereign, states might still come to share ideas and practices of cooperation that offered a basis for relatively durable institutions (Bull, 2002; Cochran, 2013, 187). This view challenged neorealism directly by providing explanations for “order without an orderer” (Waltz, 1979, 89).

Historically minded and unapologetically catholic on methods (Navari, 2009a, 1–2), ES work treats static entities and variables as processual and ideational phenomena. The balance of power is no “mechanical arrangement” or static “constellation of forces” but rather “a conscious and continuing shared practice” (Hurrell, 2002, ix). The international system is no logical functional arrangement but instead “a historically created, and evolving, structure of common understandings, rules, norms, and mutual expectations” (Hurrell, 2002, ix). International cooperation flows not from “abstract ahistorical rationalism” but from “the processes by which understanding of common interest evolved and changed through time” (Hurrell, 2002, x).

English School theorists also take a more flexible view of knowledge warrants (Dunne, 2008, 271). Those that embrace covering law explanations also insist that theory must take seriously the “singularity” or irreducible novelty of any actor or event (Bull, 2000b, 264; Watson, 1992, 1; see Linklater and Suganami, 2006, 86–87). Nor do they trouble themselves to solve this “paradox” (Bull, 2000b, 264n8)—it is simply an epistemic consequence of studying phenomena that unfurl in open time. This is most clear in ES views on history, which, although important, offers at best an “indirect” and “dim” illumination of how affairs “*may* develop in the future” (Wight, 1977, 191; Watson, 1992, 1, emphasis added; Bull, 2002, 248ff; see Linklater and Suganami, 2006, 87–91). The problem is temporal emergence and novelty—“the future is greater than what history can teach us” (Linklater and Suganami, 2006, 92; Bull, 2002, 247; Watson, 1992, 325). This renders inadequate theoretical approaches that “employ a timeless language of definitions and axioms, logical extrapolations or assertions of causal connection or general law, and do

not by themselves convey a sense of time and change'” (Linklater and Suganami, 2006, 89; quoting Bull, 2000b, 253; see also Wight, 1977, 16).

English School theorists do grapple with the tensions this open temporality engenders. Bull (2002, 247) decried “attempts to spell out the laws of [political] transformation” and “to foresee political forms that are not foreseeable.” Yet he also saw in postcolonialism “the working-out within Asian, African and Latin American countries of historical processes that are not unique to them but are universal” (Bull, 2000c, 232).¹² Other ES scholars struggled with “an unresolved tension between the historicist and nomothetic outlooks” (Linklater and Suganami, 2006, 91), most prominently in Wight’s description of international politics as the “necessitous” realm “of recurrence and repetition” (Wight, 1966, 26). In contemporary ES work this tension persists in the differences between structural and processual histories of international society, as seen respectively in Barry Buzan’s (1993, 2010; Buzan and Little, 2000) and Andrew Linklater’s (2004, 2010, 2011, 2016) works.¹³

The question of open time further informs the ES’s “great conversation” about order versus justice (Buzan, 2014, 83), or “pluralism” and “solidarism” (Bull, 2000a). Pluralism allows for the coexistence of competing value systems while providing a “thin” order based on reciprocal sovereignty and nonintervention (Dunne and Wheeler, 1996, 94–96; Linklater, 1990b, 20). This forecloses very few possibilities in time other than the wholesale disintegration of the states system or a descent into sheer chaos. Solidarism binds all states together in an ethical commitment to humanity (Bain, 2013, 161), often expressed through individual and human rights as the “ever-expanding ties of a common humanity” (Wheeler, 2000, 33). Or international law offers a “plausible progressivist story” about the “evolution” of world society (Armstrong, 1999, 548–549). Solidarism thus tames some of the vagaries of open time in a generalizing historical movement.¹⁴

This solidarist vision holds important consequences for humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect (R2P). English School justifications for intervention rest on individual rights and a “moral universalism . . . forged out of the horrors of the Holocaust,” especially when there exists a “supreme humanitarian emergency” characterized by imminent crimes that will “shock the conscience of humanity” (Wheeler, 2000, 302, 33–34; Bain, 2013, 162). In such cases, decisive, forceful action is crucial (Wheeler, 2000, 34) to address an imminent violation of solidarist norms. As with other more closed accounts of time, advocates read humanitarian intervention’s dismal record as merely indicating that solidarist project is “premature”—ahead of its time—rather than doomed or misconceived (Wheeler, 2000, 310). Similarly, after ten years of underwhelming R2P results, including the 2011 Libyan fiasco, solidarists declared the R2P norm “established” but still facing some “implementation” problems (Bellamy, 2015). Such comments demonstrate once again how firm normative commitments can constrain the temporal imagination in ways that locate promised results just over the horizon.

These diverse explanatory and normative positions reflect persistent ES concerns with the implications of open time. While some ES scholars move to decisively discipline

time, others argue the opposite, and there is little ES consensus beyond a thin or weak conception of international order. In these ways, the ES preserves a relatively open temporal sensibility.

FEMINISM

Feminist IRT revolves around the explanatory and normative observation that “‘universal’ knowledge claims . . . are based primarily on men’s lives” (Tickner, 2005, 4). Other IRTs elide women and gender, marginalizing over half the world’s population and ignoring the fact that economics (Peterson, 2005, 2015; Whitworth, 2016), nuclear weapons (Cohn, 1987), war and anarchy (Sjoberg, 2012, 2013, 2017), and a host of other “core IR” topics include and often depend on gendered elements if we bother to look.¹⁵ Opening IR to women and gender thus requires an audit of dominant explanatory modes, which are intellectual artifacts of a man’s world and inadequate to the questions many feminists want to ask (Tickner, 2005, 6). If we want to bring women into IRT we need to ask “where are the women?” (Enloe, 2014, 1–36) and to privilege “thinking from women’s lives” (Harding, 1991; Ackerly et al., 2006).

For example, historical states are “gendered entities” and gender itself “is not a single variable that can be adequately indexed or measured statistically” but rather a contingent and complex confluence of intersubjective understandings and power relationships (Tickner, 2005, 17). Taking these points seriously requires a wholesale rethink of the state as a central concept and organizing form of modern IR. Likewise, feminists embrace interpretive, ideographic, ethnographic, and even joyful methods (Tickner, 2005, 9–10; Cohn, 2006; Penttinen, 2013). They take seriously the warrants for participatory and cocreated knowledge (Tickner, 2006, 27–29; Weldon, 2006; Stern, 2006; Ackerly and True, 2008, 704) and work to recover marginalized voices and individual narratives as sites of international politics (Daigle, 2013, 2015) or use art and parody (Särmä, 2016; and in Hom, 2017a, 703–707) to disturb those politics. Finally, social science is unthinkable for feminists without an explicit engagement of one’s own temporal, disciplinary, and political position (Harding, 1991, 142; Tickner, 2005, 9; True, 2008, 413). Combined with the “experience-near” methods just tabulated, this locates feminist IR closer to the lived experience of open time. As such, feminist IR proceeds through reflexive practices of “continual adjustment” (Tickner, 2005, 9).

Key distinctions within feminism recapitulate some of the questions raised by this open view of time. Liberal feminists embrace a more closed normative vision of a universalist theory of human rights that can provide justice in local contexts (Ackerly, 2008). They also flatten out gender differences in arguments for increased female political participation based on the equality argument that “women share the same capacity for reason as men” (Whitworth, 2008, 393). Moreover, liberal feminists may retain a commitment to rationalist science and take more sanguine views of quantitative analysis (Ackerly and Cruz, 2011). This reintroduces frequentist assumptions about

the relevance of the past to the present and the commensurability of difference, both of which delimit temporal possibilities.

Standpoint feminists approach gender disparities differently, arguing that women are *better* disposed to producing accurate knowledge than men. As historically marginalized subjects, they are “less ideologically vested in maintaining the status quo” (True, 2008, 413; Whitworth, 2008, 395). Yet standpoint feminism also maintains the possibility of objectivity. According to this view, an explicitly gendered standpoint combined with the continual adjustment of scholarly reflexivity moves knowledge toward a decisive truth. Along this road to objective knowledge, standpoint approaches “homogenize” and “invalidate” differences by predetermining some values as “authentically” feminist (True, 2008, 413; Sylvester, 2002, 216). The overall effect is to reduce time to a single static continuum (Hutchings, 2016, 43), whose causal and political force may be tamed by better knowledge.

Postmodern and postcolonial feminists, by contrast, aim “to destabilize both IR’s and feminism’s philosophical and epistemological grounds” (True, 2008, 413). Any and all concepts are “assertions of power” that foreclose alternative and novel possibilities (Zalewski, 2000, 26; Whitworth, 2008, 395). Feminists should therefore embrace deconstruction’s potential for “exploring, unravelling, and rejecting the assumed naturalness of particular understandings and relationships” underpinning gender asymmetries (Whitworth, 2008, 395). Postcolonial feminists additionally criticize a maternalist and “First World feminist voice” in liberal and standpoint work (Geeta and Nair, 2014), which would teach, direct, and otherwise determine the possibilities of very different communities where gender intersects with race, indigeneity, and other representations. This feminism is not about hunting for better truths. Instead, it asks us to engage the multiplicity of gender identities and women’s lived experiences. Here time can take many forms and is graspable only in its teeming singularities.

Like other IRTs, feminism admonishes parts of the explanatory and normative mainstreams by opening up political time. It then differentiates internally in ways that discipline or embrace this open view of time to varying extents. Strong liberal normative or social scientific commitments close time down the most. On the other end of the spectrum, postcolonial and postmodern feminists maintain a radically open view of time precisely to keep interpretive and normative dialogue going as key political processes in their own right. In terms of time, this latter view comports most closely with feminism’s animating purpose. If the “forms of exclusion or privilege organized through gender . . . are never closed or fixed” and are instead “constantly being produced and reproduced” (Whitworth, 2008, 399), then time must continue to flow in a fundamentally indeterminate manner.

MARXISM

Marxism predates organized IR and was imported fairly late to IRT in only partial and problematic ways, largely due to its links to the Cold War contest between capitalism

and communism and how this inflected political science (Teschke, 2008, 163). So tracing a Marxist IR is fraught with gaps and fragments, although theorists have long noted its importance for IR (Wight, 1966; Rosenberg, 2006). Nevertheless, Marxism contributes distinctive and almost uniformly closed visions of time to IRT.¹⁶

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels theorized the emergence and progressive universalization of capitalism and its consequences: a global bourgeoisie incorporating all peoples within a single civilization, wars of imperialism driven by competitive accumulation and the need for new markets and new labor, social alienation common across the working classes, and eventually the consolidation and struggle of these classes against capitalism and its state benefactors. For Marx and Engels, these processes represented “simultaneous development on a world scale,” which would culminate “eventually in a synchronized proletarian world revolution” (Teschke, 2008, 164). Theirs was an unabashedly normative effort and a closed one at that, insofar as capitalism uniformly induced alienation, communism proffered a cure via the dissolution of “false consciousness,” and the point of theorizing was not merely to interpret the world but “to *change* it” toward specific ends (Marx, 1976, 571; see Kurki, 2009, 247–250). It was also an explanatory closure, a “singular analytic” concerned with “‘capital’ in the abstract, unfolding according to its inner contradictions” and producing through its own “dialectical self-movement” a “vertical deepening and horizontal widening” that “relegates agency and history to the margins” (Teschke, 2008, 164, 166). Marxism thus constructed a thoroughly closed vision of time: a unilinear and (ultimately) progressive arc that worked by “unifying the world geographically, homogenizing national differences sociopolitically, while polarizing class relations universally” in order to set the stage for world revolution (Teschke, 2008, 164).

International Relations theorists adapted Marxism into world systems theory and modified it with elements from Antonio Gramsci’s work. World systems theory reads international politics as continual class struggle and emphasizes the “relative tightness or looseness of the world-system” based on enduring capitalism (Wallerstein, 1974, 406, see also 1993). This is a mild relaxation of Marxist explanation but one immediately tempered by a shift from one classic closed temporality to another—where Marx and Engels anticipated a unilinear march toward revolution, world systems theory sees only cycles of capital’s dominance (Hom and Steele, 2010, 276). Neo-Gramscians (e.g., Cox, 1981, 128–130, 1983) keep the general normative ambit of Marxism but admit greater historical contingency into the story and incorporate quintessentially IR elements like international organizations and states as agents that help spread contextually specific modes of production and structures of accumulation. They also add ideology and elements of culture to help explain how capitalism moves from material exploitation to total political hegemony in the form of a global civil society (Teschke, 2008, 173–174). Yet while the explanatory story is multilinear, time remains closed—neo-Gramscians read international politics primarily as a matter of the “universalization of particular state-society complexes” (Teschke, 2008, 174). Like Marxism more generally, these IR-local variants totalize time and history as a unilinear “ascent to universality” (Linklater, 1990a, 35–41; Rosenberg, 2016, 142; Teschke, 2008, 165).

A much more recent variant of Marxist IR differentiates itself by relaxing the explanatory register further with a specific eye toward a more open view of time. Justin Rosenberg (2016, 128) proposes to ground IR as an intellectual pursuit in the “fundamental fact” of human “multiplicity.” Both in its view of the future (contra Marx) and its understanding of the past (contra neo-Gramscians), Rosenberg’s (2016, 135) argument views humanity and time itself as multiple rather than unitary. For instance, “no society undergoes a history that is truly linear and self-enclosed” and any understanding of “world development overall cannot be uni-linear or even just multi-linear” but must be instead grapple with dialectical change processes, which do not resolve teleologically but rather produce emergent novelty by “unlock[ing] new possibilities and departures through [intrinsic] mechanisms” (Rosenberg, 2016, 138–139; e.g., see Allinson, 2015). Rosenberg suggests an archetypal example in Trotsky’s uneven and combined development, which does not read various local contexts as following the same script but rather analyzes them as following similar but distinct themes and, crucially, interacting with one another to produce new and unexpected variations.¹⁷ This intersection of “differential temporalities . . . scramble[s] the causal co-ordinates of socio-political change” (Rosenberg, 2016, 142). In temporal and explanatory terms, then, this is a very different Marxist IR. It remains to be seen what sorts of closures such visions of uneven and combined development might stimulate.

CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory (CT)¹⁸ shares Marxism’s concerns with emancipation and the role of ideology in political domination. However, CT embraces a wider explanatory menu, analyzing language (Booth, 1991, 313), practices (Bilgin, 1999; Jones, 1995), and a variety of forms of subjugation (see Fierke, 2007; Krause and Williams, 1997; Yalvaç, 2017). Yet CT’s emancipatory interest also bakes a normative tension into its relationship to time. For instance, CT distinguishes itself from neorealist IR by claiming that international realm is not “immune to moral progress” and that rather than anarchic necessities, reason “determine[s] human destiny” (Shapcott, 2008, 332, 335). This involves the temporal wager that a more meaningful freedom is not only possible but also dependent on mechanisms of reason and history itself. Thus the “removal and correction” of various “distortions” of power (Shapcott, 2008, 331) allows humans’ *natural* positive capacities to come to the fore. So while CT scholars decry rationalist attempts “‘to attain technical mastery of history by perfecting the administration of society’” (Shapcott, 2008, 330; see Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002), they replace this with the working ideal of a cosmopolitan or progressive *telos* (e.g., Linklater, 1990a, 10; 2007).

Three notable variants clarify CT’s internal temporal tension. First, scholars turn to Habermas’s (1984) discourse ethics (see Diez and Steans, 2005). According to this view, once freed from ideology and political interests, open discourse between relative peers approaches “communicative *rationality*,” an impartial point of view fostering consensus

and collective action. These “ideal speech situations” allow the “force of the better argument” to carry the day (see Crawford, 2002, 29, 411–421), and encourage a politics that is simultaneously universalistic, sensitive to difference, and more open (Benhabib, 2002; Linklater, 1990a, 1998) to the materially disempowered and to alternative actors like international non-government organizations (Risse, 2000). This variant of CT implies a domestic analogy—namely that the consensual motor of discourse ethics works outside well-ordered situations (Crawford, 2002, 419).¹⁹ It also brackets any speech situations in which interests, identities, political purposes, or basic worldviews are fundamentally incompatible (see Hutchings, 2005, 160). These two assumptions enable an account of social relations, freed from power political constraints, naturally sluicing toward meaningful consensus.

Second, critical security studies (CSS) makes emancipation the centerpiece of alternative conceptions of security (Wyn Jones, 1999, 5). Driven by a concern with the everyday oppression of ordinary individuals, CSS constructs a deeper and wider notion of security oriented away from the state and toward lived freedom (Booth, 1997, 114; 2007, 101–105; also Krause and Williams, 1996; Ewan, 2007). Overdetermined situations are insecure situations, while security is “survival-plus”—an existence beyond survival-struggles that prioritizes “the freedom of individual and groups compatible with the reasonable freedom of others, and universal moral equality compatible with justifiable pragmatic inequalities” (Booth, 2007, 106, 4). Critical security studies also argues that emancipatory security is a “process rather than an endpoint” (Wyn Jones, 1999, 78), drawing inspiration from human creativity rather than any “timeless or static” (and therefore “false”) concept of emancipation (Booth, 2007, 210, 113). These comments locate emancipatory security in “localized and unfinished process[es],” far away from any “blueprint” or “unidirectional path towards an emancipated end-state” (Nunes, 2012, 353).

This looks like a relatively open view of time. Yet critics still worry about implicit normative closures. For them, CSS reflects a particularly Western (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006), liberal-individualist (Shepherd, 2008, 70), and otherwise essentialized worldview. This skepticism responds in part to a CSS tendency to treat emancipation as a “philosophical anchorage” (“a basis for saying whether something is ‘true’”), a “theory of progress for society, and a practice of resistance against oppression” (Booth, 2007, 112). While they may insist that these functions can only relate to provisional and concrete contexts (Booth, 2007, 112–113), such comments highlight a delicate balancing act. Critical security studies wants to *locate* emancipation in relatively open time but *ground* it in invocations of truth, progress, and a “conscious universalism” (Booth, 2007, 1). In this, CSS taps into a venerable tradition of negotiating the vagaries of open time by appeal to more stable foundations. Relatedly, by insisting that emancipation is vital but never fully realizable, CSS recapitulates the liberal tendency to studiously place its animating normative conclusion just out of reach.

A third offshoot of CT, “sustainable critique” (Levine, 2012; see also Barder and Levine, 2012; Levine and Barder, 2014), pursues a more concertedly open relationship to time. Rather than consensus or emancipation, sustainable critique forwards reflexivity,

juxtaposing our basic need for concepts and models with the catastrophic potential of such tools when we forget their essentially artificial and provisional nature (Levine, 2012, 14–29). This is not about realizing freedom but rather the more limited need to “chasten” reason and theory in order to limit horrific outcomes (Levine, 2012, 29–37). Such limited aims and a focus on resisting the “false sense of necessity, inevitability, scientific objectivity, or naturalness” produced by reification preserve a more open view of time, or “the full, dynamic, and constantly changing nature of things-as-such” (Levine and Barder, 2014, 869, see also 871). In another break with earlier CT, sustainable critique’s response to the persistent dangers of reification is *not* to elevate any specific critical alternative but instead to recommend a “constellar” approach of balancing one’s own account against others while paying particular attention to what incommensurable worldviews and mutually exclusive choices these comparisons disclose (Levine, 2012, 225–258). By trading in progressive endpoints for the perpetual juxtaposition of opposing viewpoints, sustainable critique cultivates an open and open-ended vision of IRT that can remain with (rather than confront) the implications of politics in open time.

CONCLUSION

International Relations theory manifests interesting temporal dynamics and tensions. Each theoretical tradition begins as an argument against its self-identified foil (usually an existing theory), and this typically involves some variation on the theme that time unfolds in more ways than the foil admits.²⁰ These traditions then differentiate internally based on how individual variants respond to open time. In realism, constructivism, feminism, and critical theory, for instance, oscillations between open and closed time track major internal developments. In liberalism and somewhat less so Marxism, there is more consistency. Both tendencies have much to do with scholars’ social scientific and normative commitments. Stringent explanatory standards or vigorous normative commitments are each sufficient to close down time—where both prevail, as in liberalism, the closure verges on total. Time-driven closures also occur within traditions. Neorealism, second-generation constructivism, solidarist ES, liberal and standpoint feminism, and emancipatory CTs tend not to accept time as a contingent and open-ended flow. Instead, they offer social and political proposals that can “solve” these temporal dynamics or propound time as an orderly continuum constituted by robust causal mechanisms, functional or progressive logics, or the frequentist promise that past tendencies capture future possibilities.

One branch of IR theorizing has been conspicuously absent from this survey. Postmodern and poststructural, or lowercase “c” critical approaches, constitute the bulk of IR’s explicit engagements with time to date. This literature looks quite promising at first because it consistently avows temporal openness, possibility, and contingency (e.g., Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010; Edkins, 2003; Hutchings, 2007, 2008; Lundborg, 2011; Shapiro, 2001, 2010, 2016). However, the sheer variety of times put forward in this

literature defies easy categorization—not least because critical time scholars rarely if ever engage each other's alternative temporalities except to acknowledge their shared purpose of challenging the conventional times of hegemonic political logics (Hom, 2018a, 70–71). Moreover, as I detail elsewhere (Hom, 2018b), critical exemplars tend to be so committed to an open view of “the political” that they *empty* out time altogether, refusing to say what might constitute it, from whence it springs, and what its consequences are (e.g., Edkins, 2003, 2013; Lundborg, 2011, 2016; Shapiro, 2016). This is a metatheoretical effort to preserve sheer possibility *as such*—but it leaves much of the heavy lifting about how we might use time to rethink politics unfinished. In the context of our animating question, it will be interesting to see whether this empty view of time prevents critical scholars from realizing the reconstructive and affirmative projects implied in their temporal deconstructions.

While sympathetic with an open view of time and the critical wing of IR, my own work on time proposes a different approach altogether. The upshot of open/closed time has to do with how we think political relations unfold, how we might steer them, and whether we can do so without irreconcilable conceptual and practical violence to alternative ways of becoming. Open/closed time thus hinges on a question of *timing*, understood not merely as co-incidence but a much more robust intellectual and practical effort to *imagine and establish* dynamic relationships between change processes (Hom, 2018a, 71–75). This is why time cannot coherently remain empty—uttering “time” implies some substantive proposal about which changes matter, how they emerge and relate to extant situations, and how they enable and constrain action. International Relations theory registers temporal claims because theorists are trying to understand just these sorts of underlying timing dynamics of international politics. Open time reflects an interest in timing or putting politics together so as to cultivate flexibility, reversibility, and creativity; closed time reflects a need to provide more robust assurances about how things will turn out. The fundamental tension between open and closed time, then, stems from and reflects the persistent challenges of timing international politics, which are always complex, dynamic, and never really finished (Hom, 2018a, 77–78).

NOTES

1. Lundborg (2011) applies this same framework to terrorism. Walker's (1993) seminal treatment of time purposefully reads IR as an instance of political theory, highlighting presumptions about states as containers of unirectilinear progress with cyclically violent interrelations.
2. I make closely related arguments about IR *theorizing* (Hom, 2018a, and Andrew R. Hom “Reckoning Ruin: International Relations and the Problem of Time” [Edinburgh, book manuscript in preparation]), but these concern the *processes* of theorizing rather than the finished products of *substantive* IRT.
3. That is, IRT displays a loose fractal similarity on the question of time (Jackson, 2011, 211; and in Hom, 2017a, 700).
4. For elaborations of many themes and links summarized in this section, see Hom (2018a).

5. Although Craig (2003, 137–165) notes that the “later Waltz” beat a “retreat from parsimony,” encouraging “great power management” to forestall just what he had said was unlikely—thermonuclear war.
6. Proponents understood democracy as a means of addressing “the issues raised in the flow of time” so that “at length, a system of justice and order is educed out of chaos” (Lord Macaulay, quoted in Dickson, 1919, 17).
7. A normative attention bias complemented this shift. Neoliberal institutionalist research emphasized institutions deemed “welfare promoting, not exploitative,” which helped erase problems of global inequality implicated in institutional processes (Richardson, 2008, 226–227).
8. This historical sensitivity gives constructivism a substantive affinity with ES theorizing (Hurrell, 2002, xii; Leira and de Carvalho, 2017).
9. On the second generation, see Kessler and Steele (2017), Barder and Levine (2012), and Leira and de Carvalho (2017).
10. On the disciplinary strategies of these engagements, see Finnemore and Sikkink (2001, 396).
11. Contemporaneous studies about the dark side of ideas and norms, for instance how a “will to manifest [collective] identity” drove colonialism and imperialism (Hall, 1999) received conspicuously less attention and acclaim during this period.
12. This recalls “temporal othering,” which closes down time by synthesizing a series of co-eval singularities into a totalizing story of political development (Hom and Steele, 2016; Hom, 2016).
13. On the question of openness to ambiguity, multiple outcomes, and “de-civilizing processes” in Linklater’s temporal vision, cf. (Linklater, 2011, 11, 14, 18, 172–175, 2017; and Hobson, 2017; Lawson 2017).
14. As further reflection, however, of the ES grappling with open time rather than decisively solving it, others note that solidarist projects can threaten international order by undercutting sovereignty or cultivating distinctly noncosmopolitan visions of monarchy, political Islam, and transnational ethnic hatreds (Bain, 2013, 165; Buzan, 2010, 41, 122, 199; Dunne, 2008, 275, 279).
15. For a treatment of feminist time in political theory, see Bryson (2007).
16. For a fascinating study of Marxist time and political institutions, see Hanson (1997).
17. For a critique of Rosenberg’s account, see Allinson and Anievas (2009).
18. There are a number of IR approaches critical of mainstream, statist, and/or neopositivist grand theories. Following Shapcott (2008, 329), this section concerns work inspired by Frankfurt School or “large ‘C’ critical theory.” It does not address postmodern, poststructural, or postcolonial theories (see Hom, 2018b).
19. Crawford’s (2002, 421–422) work on slavery and decolonization concludes that a world discourse ethics is possible, but only in the more limited form of “developing ‘principles’ (not law or procedures) of basic conduct” rather than “*reaching* [the telos of] consensus.”
20. One consideration linking such openings is that they make political change possible—the world has to be malleable if we want to show how to transform it (see Whitworth, 2008, 399).

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CHAPTER 19

TIME IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TIME

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THROUGHOUT the past decade of “crisis politics” we have witnessed an acceleration of decision-making in multilateral negotiations where time pressure, time discourse, time rules, and actors’ time horizons have become a crucial part of the political rhetoric in European and global governance. In trade negotiations at the 2013 Geneva Ministerial Conference, the US trade representative Michael Froman urged other World Trade Organization (WTO) member states to agree on a multilateral trade agreement after years of deadlock to prove that the WTO was still an important global trade actor (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2013). During the euro area crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board was sidelined in decision-making by the IMF president and her staff. This was publicly justified with the argument that the urgency of the situation in a context of high uncertainty and potential regional and global contagion demanded quick and flexible decisions without the formal involvement of the board (Independent Evaluation Office, 2016). More recently, in the run-up to Brexit negotiations, actors on both sides created time pressure by committing to a short time frame for consultations and, at the same time, raising expectations for possible negotiation outcomes. Michel Barnier, the European Union (EU) chief negotiator, warned that crucial time was passing as the formal start of negotiations was delayed because of the British prime minister’s call for snap elections in June 2017, itself a strategic move to gain political momentum (The Telegraph, 2017).

These three examples illustrate not only that time plays a central role in the international arena, but also that actors use time discourses and time pressure to legitimize their actions and gain favorable negotiating positions in European and international organizations (IOs). Thus, time is a crucial factor in explaining interactions among actors

in global governance. Against this background, this chapter has a twofold aim. First, it examines how actors use time in IOs with a particular focus on multilateral negotiations to justify their actions. Recurring to international relations (IR) studies and negotiation analysis, this chapter explores six different dimensions of time in IOs: time pressure, time discourse, time rules, time costs, time horizons, and time as a resource. Second, this chapter delineates the evolution of IOs over time with the focus on innovations that emerged to adapt the system to new political and economic circumstances. This piece looks particularly at changes within and outside of IOs. Recurring to central concepts used by historical institutionalism—including path dependence, critical junctures, sequencing, and positive feedback effects—allows us to map patterns of incremental change—displacement, conversion, drift, and layering—in IOs over time. This, in turn, provides a better understanding of how IOs adapt in response to complex challenges and new circumstances.

The following sections are therefore organized around the conceptualization of time in IR along different research traditions—including rationalist, constructive, and negotiation analysis approaches. Particular attention is given to historical institutionalism with its focus on the temporal development of institutions. We will turn to central historical institutionalist concepts to examine change and stability in IOs over time. This includes assessment of four common patterns of incremental change in IOs over time. This allows us to engage with recent studies in the field and to map current strengths and weaknesses in this research field.

TIME IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Time plays a central role in politics in general and in IOs in particular, since actors interact in a specific temporal framework. Nevertheless, current research on the role time plays in politics is divided between comparative politics and IR. For example, scholars focusing on the life cycles of democracy and the impact of time on legislative politics (Döring, 1995), political time in the EU (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009), and political time and historical institutionalism (Büthe, 2002; Bulmer, 2009; Fioretos, 2011) ignore the negotiation literature (Sebenius, 1992; Raiffa et al., 2002) and vice versa. These two subdisciplines of political science have adopted six different perspectives on time. First, historical institutionalists understand time as *historical time* and are particularly interested in explaining developments over time (Pierson, 1996, 2004; Bulmer, 2009; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Second, time can be viewed as an *institutional property* with a focus on *temporal rules* and their effects (lengths of mandates, budgets, and shorttime horizons of policymakers) on policy outcomes (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Rasch and Tsebelis, 2011). Third, *time as a resource* is concerned with the sequencing, speed, duration, and timing of decisions. For example, Schedler and Santiso (1998) operationalize time as a resource, focusing on the following aspects: *time rules*, which refer to the institutional time constraints democratic politics face; *time strategies*, that is, how

political actors deal with these constraints; *time discourses*, that is, the arguments they use to justify their strategies; and *time effects*, defined as the impact time has as an independent variable. Their exploratory study remains one of the most ambitious in bringing forward the theoretical conceptualization of time. Fourth, *comparative research* deals with the temporal dimension of variation and the comparative method (Bartolini, 1993). Fifth, negotiation literature highlights the influence of *time pressure* and *deadlines* on negotiation outcomes (Pruitt, 1981; Stuhlmacher and Champagne, 2000; Narlikar, 2010). Finally, other scholars view *time as the cost* of not reaching an agreement (Fearon, 1998). The costliness of delay may be due to two factors. Delaying an agreement means spending more time in negotiations without the benefits an agreement would bring, and with the passage of time there is also a risk that one bargaining party will break off negotiations entirely and look for other trading partners.

In the specific subfield of international negotiations, several studies examine different aspects of time: perceptions of time (Alon and Brett, 2007), time discourses (Saorín-Iborra, 2008), turning points (Druckman, 2001; Deitelhoff, 2009), time pressure (Cross, 1996; Watkins, 1998; Stuhlmacher and Champagne, 2000), “early” and “late” stages of negotiations (Stevens, 1963), the concept of “ripeness” (Zartman, 1989), stalemates and deadlocks (Héritier, 1999; Pruitt and Kim, 2004; Gamble, 2010; Narlikar, 2010), duration of negotiations (Simonelli, 2011), time horizons (Schneider, 1989), democracy and time (Schedler and Santiso, 1998), time structures in parliamentary and presidential political systems (Riescher, 1994), the timescape of the European Union (EU) (Pierson, 1996; Bulmer, 2009; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling, 2009), and the temporal dimension of historical processes (Bartolini, 1993; Büthe, 2002; Pierson, 2004). Even though there is meanwhile a wide range of studies focusing on negotiations as a process with different stages (Evenett, 2006; Lee and Wilkinson, 2007; Singh, 2008; Ghosn, 2010; Narlikar, 2010), the vast majority of empirical research on international negotiations within IOs, such as the WTO, focuses on one point in time, that is, on one ministerial conference (Das, 2000, 2006; Kerremans, 2004; Evenett, 2006; Odell, 2009) while often ignoring the effects of time on negotiations. More recent studies have examined WTO negotiations over time and bridged negotiation literature and IR approaches (Conceição-Heldt, 2011).

There have been several attempts to grasp how the temporal dimension shapes negotiation processes in IOs. Scholarship has shown that the time variable can intervene in two important ways. First of all, international negotiations have different negotiating stages that are influenced by endogenous time rules that concern internally imposed time constraints, that is, when deadlines are set within an IO during the bargaining process. Under established deadlines, greater time pressure is expected to accentuate the perceived importance of reaching agreement and to lead to a softer approach to negotiations involving a lower level of demands and greater concessions. Second, exogenous time rules are not imposed internally by negotiators but respond to external factors, for example, timing of electoral cycles that refer to the institutional time constraints that elected politicians face. Moreover, impasses in negotiations are caused not only by time constraints but also by actors’ best or worst alternatives to a negotiated agreement (BATNA/WATNA). The worse the alternative to a negotiated agreement is,

the lower the resistance point of a negotiator is likely to be. Negotiators may also come under pressure because their BATNAs deteriorate with the passing of time or because their counterparts improve. This means that when a trade power—such as the EU or the United States—signs bilateral or regional trade agreements, it is less dependent on agreement at the WTO and is less likely to make concessions at the multilateral level.

Multilateral negotiations occur under some form of implicit time pressure—for example, when there is a need to finish a negotiation—or explicit time pressure, when actors themselves set a deadline (Stuhlmacher and Champagne, 2000; Conceição-Heldt, 2013). Most studies broadly agree that time pressure has an impact on both the processes and outcomes of negotiations. In terms of process, high time pressure speeds negotiations, leading to quicker concessions and agreement and lower demands than low time pressure (Carnevale et al., 1993; Svenson and Maule, 1993; Stuhlmacher and Champagne, 2000). In terms of outcomes, Stuhlmacher et al. (1998) suggest that time pressure fosters cooperative behavior. *Time pressure* in multilateral negotiations refers to the need to end the negotiation process as soon as possible. The proximity of internally and externally imposed deadlines is more likely to provoke time pressure. This is why making a distinction between endogenous time rules or constraints and exogenous time rules helps us to bring the discussion in this field forward. *Endogenous time rules* refer to explicit internal time pressure that corresponds to an internally imposed condition, namely, when deadlines are set and bargaining parties thus know that the amount of time available to negotiate is limited. *Exogenous time rules* are linked to implicit external time pressure that is not imposed internally by negotiators but responds to external factors, such as the timing of election cycles. In terms of process, high time pressure (when a deadline is approaching) can be expected to have an impact on the speed of negotiations by producing quicker concessions and agreements as well as lower demands than low time pressure (at the beginning of a negotiation process).

Under established deadlines and acute time pressure, a softer approach to negotiations involving a lower level of demands and greater concessions is more likely. Whereas in the early negotiating stage there is only mild time pressure, the late stage of negotiation is characterized by acute time pressure due to the deadline effect (Stevens, 1963). Actors realize that at least one of them has to make major concessions that might lead to reciprocal concessions from other bargaining parties. If actors concede in the early negotiating stage, this will elicit tough behavior and further demands from other bargaining parties rather than concessions in the late negotiating stages. Whereas in the early negotiating stage, a concession is often considered a sign of weakness and elicits tough behavior in return, in the late stage, by contrast, concessions from one negotiator might lead to a return concession from the other bargaining parties, making agreement more likely (Conceição-Heldt, 2011).

Whether actors move from their initial positions and negotiations end with an agreement is a function not only of endogenous but also of exogenous time rules, for example, the timing of the electoral cycle. In the last year of an election cycle, national government representatives will be less likely to accept trade agreements that are linked with costs for major constituencies. Schelling (1960) was one of the first to note that

an executive can point to a recalcitrant legislature to extract greater concessions in international negotiations. If we extrapolate this conjecture of weakness to the election cycle, we would expect national government representatives to make fewer concessions at the international level in the last year of an electoral term. They will try to obtain more concessions from the other bargaining parties by arguing that internal weakness hinders them from conceding on issues with important national consequences.

The timing of election cycles can be conceptualized by defining two different periods of electoral cycles in different countries. Like the economy with its business cycles (Nordhaus, 1975), the notion of the electoral cycle in politics is related to the idea that during any national government's term of office there are popularity cycles with differing political consequences depending on the time that has elapsed since the last election. This leads me to the distinction between two different periods in election cycles: *the early (honeymoon) period*, the first and second years after the legislative/presidential election; and the *later term period*, the period of time that goes beyond the second year. These two periods can be expected to have an impact on bargaining outcomes in IOs. Politicians are primarily interested in maximizing their chances of re-election. Short-term results are essential to politicians, as in the next elections they will have to show what they have achieved (Pierson, 1996). It is thus more likely that governments will only accept international trade agreements that generate costs for national constituencies during the early term period of their mandates. The window of opportunity just after elections offers new governments an ideal opportunity to introduce unpopular measures, counting on citizens' capacity to forget. Governments are aware that such policy windows occur and that they do not stay open for long (Kingdon, 2003). The later term period of an election cycle is a less propitious time to introduce unpopular measures due to the fear of electoral backlash. Accordingly, national government representatives should be able to concede more at the multilateral level during the early period than in the later term period. If WTO negotiations characterized by winners and losers in different policy areas take place in the later term period of the election cycle of one important trade power—the EU, the United States, or one of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) states—representatives from these countries can be expected to concede less if concessions have a negative impact on national constituencies, such as farm or industry groups. This means that future studies linking the timing of election cycles at the national level to the timing of multilateral negotiations remain a promising avenue of research.

Endogenous and exogenous time rules help us explain deadlocked negotiations, but at the same time negotiators may also come under pressure because their BATNAs deteriorate with the passing of time or because their counterparts improve. This brings us to the fallback position or outside options of actors (Conceição-Heldt, 2013). International relations scholarship widely agrees that actors with a good outside option can use their bargaining leverage to obtain more concessions than an actor without such an option, for example by threatening to walk away from the bargaining table (Stone, 2011; Conceição-Heldt, 2013; Conceição-Heldt and Meunier, 2014). Actors' BATNAs and changes in their values have an impact on bargaining outcomes (Odell, 2002).

The BATNA defines where the reservation point of a negotiator lies. This is the point at which an actor would prefer stalemate over negotiation. When actors have attractive outside options to reaching a bargain at the multilateral level that are more attractive than the status quo, we can expect them to make fewer concessions (Gamble, 2010). This implies that the worse the alternative is to a negotiated agreement, the lower the reservation value will be and the more concessions an actor will make (Odell, 2000). Dependence on the other party increases as agreement yields greater benefits relative to the value of independent alternatives (Lax and Sebenius, 1999).

Assessing actors' BATNA is a useful tool to explain the concession rate of bargaining parties. We assume that if an actor does not have an alternative to a multilateral trade agreement, it has weak bargaining power. By the same token, the better the outside option of an actor is, the less dependent it will be on a multilateral trade agreement. In addition, bargaining parties can take action away from the negotiating table to influence their counterparts' perceptions of their BATNAs (Lax and Sebenius, 1986). Such action is intended to influence counterparts' perceptions of time-related costs. Whereas at the bargaining table some of the negotiators concerned might delay, engineer an impasse, and seek to convince counterparts they are in no haste to reach an agreement within the WTO, away from the table, they may work to strengthen their own BATNA and weaken the BATNA of their counterparts (Watkins, 1998). This strategy, however, involves the risk that if all negotiators succeed in convincing each other that delay is costless, there will be no incentive to find a compromise solution all can agree to. Likewise, negotiators may end up trapped in a "you-concede-first" position that contributes to impasse (Conceição-Heldt, 2011). Moreover, negotiations can break down if, for example, bargaining parties exaggerate their resistance points or misrepresent their preferences (Morrow, 1992; Dür, 2010).

The presence of a BATNA has a twofold effect on time constraints. On the one hand, it might put those seeking agreement under increased time pressure while reducing this pressure for those who have a good BATNA. At the same time, the BATNA/WATNA will have an impact on actors' bargaining strategies. Actors with a good BATNA will make use of distributive strategy that includes high opening demands, refusing concessions, bluffing, and issuing threats. In turn, actors with a WATNA are more likely to adopt an integrative or value-creating strategy by moving from their initial demands, sharing information, and searching for alternative solutions to find agreement (Odell, 2009). As Narlikar (2010) posits, if negotiators engage in integrative bargaining, the probability of deadlocked negotiations decreases, whereas the choice of distributive bargaining strategies by one or more actors increases the likelihood of deadlock.¹

Whereas part of the negotiation literature works within a historical institutionalist framework, IR literature embeds IOs in time using a historical institutionalist approach by underlining the caveats of rational choice approaches with its focus on one point in time. Time in IOs constitutes one central area of research, a second focuses on the evolution of IOs. Adaptation and innovation over time in global governance includes changes within and outside IOs. We turn now to the temporal development of IOs with

a special focus on change and stability over time using mainly the historical institutionalism prism.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TIME

Since the end of World War II, the modern system of global governance has undergone profound changes. The number, scope, and authority of international institutions have grown considerably in the course of recent decades (Goldstein et al., 2000; Koremenos, 2016). International institutions are more numerous in a larger set of issue areas, including security, the economy, human rights, and the environment. Within this dense web of institutions, a substantive degree of authority has shifted from the national to the international level (Genschel and Zangl, 2014; Zürn, 2018). New forms of governance arrangements are proliferating (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013; Abbott et al., 2016; Andonova, 2017) and the number and power of classical IOs have grown. In contrast to much of the dominant rational choice literature—notably principal-agent approaches—which focuses strongly on the formal foundations of IOs and other global governance arrangements, recent studies have begun to investigate the transformations of formal and informal IOs.

The need for more encompassing theoretical accounts of how IO institutional design develops over time is fueled by two developments in global governance and respective research. First, a number of large-scale data-collection research projects have demonstrated that the institutional design of IOs changes considerably as organizations grow older. Hooghe et al. (2017) and Lenz et al. (2015) demonstrate, for instance, how the level of delegated and pooled authority has changed as time passes. Similarly, research focusing on the financial and personnel capabilities and the subtle changes of respective formal rules (Bayram and Graham, 2017; Heldt and Schmidtke, 2017; Reinsberg et al., 2017) investigates the substantive development of IOs over time. For example, Tallberg et al. (2013) have shown how IOs have opened up to transnational actors especially since the end of the Cold War (see also Grigorescu, 2015). While these and other projects focus on different aspects of the institutional design of IOs, they all demonstrate that IOs transform as they grow older.

Second, a number of recent publications in IR have highlighted the potential of historical institutionalism to explain the emergence, stability, and development of IOs in time (Rixen et al., 2016; Fioretos, 2017; Lipsky, 2017). These studies have begun to unfold a research program that takes temporal dynamics in global governance seriously. Building on conceptual and theoretical tools developed in comparative politics (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010, 2015), this research has demonstrated that institutional change takes place in different modes, at different speeds, and with varying scope (see also Kaya, 2015).

Generally, historical institutionalism offers a number of theoretical modules that could fill in the blind spots of both rational and sociological institutionalism (Zürn,

2016) as well as negotiation literature. By focusing on path dependence, critical junctures, timing, and sequence, the historical institutionalist perspective can contribute to explaining why some formal and informal IO institutional designs are more resilient to change than others and why the speed and scope of institutional development vary considerably across formal and informal IOs.

Changes in IOs over time can either be internal or external. Adjustments inside IOs are due to growing membership; expansion of issue scope, tasks, and capabilities (Hooghe et al., 2016; Heldt and Schmidtke, 2017); legalization of IOs (Abbott et al., 2000); legitimacy (Zaum, 2013); and abuse of power concerns (Grant and Keohane, 2005), including IOs autonomously going beyond their delegated power (agency slack) (Heldt, 2017). Changes within IOs include openness to civil society organizations (CSOs) (Tallberg et al., 2013) and enhancement of transparency and accountability mechanisms (Koenig-Archibugi, 2016; Heldt, 2018). External changes include global power shifts (Kaya, 2015; Lipsky, 2017), growing IO density (Alter and Meunier, 2009; Gehring and Faude, 2014), contestation and politicization of IOs (Zürn, 2018), and European institutions (De Wilde et al., 2016).

Following major contestation by CSOs in the 1990s, the WTO, IMF, and World Bank have become increasingly transparent, open, and accountable to multiple stakeholders, for example, states, CSOs, and public opinion. For example, after the demonstrations at the 1999 ministerial meeting in Seattle, the WTO created an official forum for dialogue with CSOs that takes place annually, and the IMF established the Independent Evaluation Office in the same year. Confronted with a wave of criticism—by CSOs such as 50 Years Is Enough and Bretton Woods Project, national parliaments (notably, the US Congress), and large developing countries—for its opacity, unaccountability, and inefficiency, the World Bank established several internal accountability mechanisms. Between 1999 and 2015, the World Bank introduced the Inspection Panel, the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman, the Independent Evaluation Group, the Internal Audit Vice Presidency, and the Grievance Redress Service (Heldt, 2018).

The expansion of accountability mechanisms in IOs over time reflects a broader trend within IOs to open up (Tallberg et al., 2013). Innovations in horizontal mechanisms, including internal and external accountability mechanisms have accelerated (Woods, 2002; Grant and Keohane, 2005; Grigorescu, 2010) with the aim of increasing transparency and performance (Gutner and Thompson, 2010; Weaver, 2010; Best, 2016), as well as filling the legitimacy gaps from which the IMF and the World Bank suffer (Best, 2007; Zaum, 2013; Gronau and Schmidtke, 2016), and legitimation strategies they have started to develop (Tallberg and Zürn, 2019). These initiatives have revolved around representation in decision-making bodies; balanced voting weights; the inclusion of civil society; how executives are held accountable by member states; and the dissemination of information (Grigorescu, 2015, 7). More recent studies show that the proliferation of internal accountability mechanisms has paradoxically made the World Bank more encapsulated and less accountable to the outside world (Heldt, 2018). On these metrics, despite appearing at some remove from absolute success, the IMF and the World Bank appear further along than most other IOs. The empirical record suggests that these

sources may be multiple, almost certainly tied to the importance given to securing legitimacy for these IOs since their creation. Disagreements exist, however, about the effects of accountability innovations. Studies find that discussions within public forums have had small effects because they have been strictly limited (O'Brien et al., 2000), and conclude that such forums represented more of "an attempt to restore a consensus about the rationalities of the institutions than an actual attempt to open up for critics" (Deitelhoff, 2012, 72).

The relative rigidity and inflexibility of classical IOs have meant that when agreement could not be reached within formal channels, governments have experimented with alternatives. In the aftermath of efforts with the IMF to quickly resolve the crisis in the par value system in the early 1970s, governments in large industrialized nations undertook important departures when they introduced informal forums alongside the multilateral IOs. Informal organizations, in particular the Group of Seven (G7) and Group of Twenty (G20), have created the impetus for innovation in global governance over the past decades. These informal organizations entail no treaties, buildings, or joint staff, but nevertheless constitute forums with the power to markedly influence the nature of global governance. For example, the emergence of the G20 followed a similar path. In the aftermath of the Asia Financial Crisis, a G20 forum dedicated to intergovernmental or transgovernmental cooperation was created with a leadership level added during the global financial crisis. The addition of these nonmultilateral organizations underscores that the tapestry of global governance institutions has become richer.

The increasing density of institutions in the field of multilateral development agencies and the proliferation of trade agreements at the bilateral and regional levels raises question about whether the World Bank and the WTO are still needed. Dissatisfaction with reforms in both organizations has led emerging powers to look for alternatives. This has resulted in the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB). The founders of the NDB reiterate that it should primarily be understood as a complement to the World Bank. The NDB allows BRICs to fund their infrastructure projects without having to comply with the good governance principles of the World Bank. By contrast, China announced that the AIIB would compete with the World Bank and would change the rules of the global development finance system. These instances of "contested multilateralism" (Morse and Keohane, 2014) are partly the result of expanding accountability mechanisms within legacy organizations and perceptions that these pursue bureaucratically demanding one-size-fits-all policies. In a recent study, Heldt and Schmidtke (2019) compare the institutional design of multilateral development banks and find that these newest banks (NDB and AIIB) do not fundamentally challenge the global development finance system. They rather contribute to reinforcing it by reproducing the institutional design of the World Bank.

The density and fragmentation of IOs and the addition of informal organizations over time raise questions about the stability of the multilateral order. On the one hand, the addition of new organizations has created a more populated system of organizations devoted to global matters. This trend appears to reduce the relative importance of legacy

IOs; it could undermine the provision of global public goods should a concentration of power be necessary to sustain a cooperative multilateral system. On the other hand, the proliferation and expansion of IOs are in line with a decentralized system of governance where much of the most important political authority remains with national governments and agencies. A denser system of IOs does not necessarily mean that it is one more fully governed. Throughout their history, IOs have had gaps in their architecture, sometimes by explicit design, sometimes because multilateral negotiations ended in deadlock. Whatever the reason for these gaps, a decentralized system can be more successful in effectively responding to new, complex challenges. It gives political entrepreneurs room within the legacy organization to rapidly, if sometimes only temporarily, expand their authority. In the context of the euro area crisis, for example, the IMF president, Christine Lagarde, decided to participate in European financial programs without acquiring the formal consent of IMF member states on the grounds that the urgency of the situation did not allow for a lengthy process to secure such consent. To be sure, additional IOs can have a positive effect on the system by stabilizing it. For instance, if new institutions are created to complement rather than compete with old IOs, new institutions are more likely to collaborate with the old ones, this might make the system much more resilient. If new institutions are dependent on the expertise of established ones, the latter can act as focal IOs in their respective fields. Focality refers to the extent to which an organization in a given domain is a single focal entity or one among several alternatives (Fioretos and Heldt, 2019).

The management and regulation of complex economic issues and overlapping organizations were themes already discussed at the Bretton Woods conference, when the current global economic governance system was born. This multilateral economic order was conceived as one in which a certain degree of nested governance was desirable. Expressed most forcefully in the International Trade Organization Havana Charter, the interconnectedness of monetary, financial, trade, social, and developmental policy was plainly recognized. This was also very clearly stated in the provision that countries joining the IMF would automatically join its sister organization, the World Bank, and vice versa.

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

This discussion on the evolution of global economic governance institutions brings us back to the analytical foundations of historical institutionalism with its toolbox of concepts with temporal properties and processes and mechanisms that shape the origin, stability, and innovations of IOs over time. Historical institutionalism offers promising insights in three areas. First, by drawing attention to the legacies of founding moments, the consequences of exogenous shocks and new ideas, the prevalence of incremental

over radical reforms, and the unintended aspects of IO origins and change, this approach shows that historical processes shape institutional outcomes over time. Second, the theorization of sunk costs and the focus on positive feedback effects—defined as “mechanisms that increase the attractiveness of existing arrangements over time” (Fioretos, 2017, 14)—allow for a better conceptualization of endogenous change. Finally, historical institutionalism’s origins in comparative politics and its focus on domestic politics provides a new perspective on interaction between the domestic and international levels (Rixen et al., 2016) and provides a useful bridge to negotiation literature with its focus on different dimensions of time in IOs, including time pressure, time costs, time strategies, time horizons, or time as a resource. With its focus on historical processes, historical institutionalism constitutes a distinct approach to IOs analysis and serves to reintegrate the subfields of comparative politics, IR, and negotiation analysis. Historical institutionalism constitutes an excellent complement to the classical two level-games perspective, with its focus on the domestic and international arenas. The two level-games approach is particularly complex due to the plethora of actors, institutions, and interactions at the international, domestic, and transnational levels. From the two-level-games perspective, government representatives are “chief negotiators” engaged in international negotiations for which they ultimately need to gain domestic approval (ratification) (Putnam, 1988; Conceição-Heldt and Mello, 2017). Whereas the two-level-games approach allows us to understand international politics by opening the black box of domestic politics, historical institutionalism brings the legacies of IO founding moments and development over time into the analysis. Scholars have argued that the preferences and bargaining power of governments at the international level are determined not only by the preferences of interest groups (Dür, 2010; Conceição-Heldt, 2011, 2013) and market size (Drezner, 2007; Conceição-Heldt and Meunier, 2014) but also by institutional and regulatory capacities at the domestic level (Fioretos, 2001; Bütte and Mattli, 2010; Farrell and Newman, 2010).

One of the central concepts introduced by historical institutionalism is path dependence, which refers to dynamic processes involving positive feedback effects (or self-reinforcement), which can generate multiple outcomes “depending on the particular sequence in which events unfold” (North, 1990, 92–96; Pierson, 2004, 20). If we extrapolate this definition to IOs, path dependence is given “once it becomes ever less likely that alternatives will take their place” (Fioretos, 2017, 12). The interest in path-dependent processes in IOs has arisen in the context of understanding why particular institutional designs stay in place over extended periods of time and why they are difficult to abolish, even if the causes for their establishment are no longer present or if they are more inefficient than alternatives.

The puzzle of high levels of stability in IOs has led scholars to focus on different sets of mechanisms, paying particular attention to the various forms of path dependence. For example, Vetterlein and Moschella (2014) developed a new version of path dependence to account for the depth of policy change within the IMF. They compare a case of self-reinforcing path dependence—defined as a process of change through which the IMF has acquired power relating to poverty reduction issues—and a case of reactive path

dependence—characterized as a process of change enabling the IMF to develop policies of surveillance over time. The authors consider that path dependence approaches need to be linked with insights from sociological institutionalism, as this can explain how and why divergent organizational changes—“down the path” and “off the path”—happen.

While the global governance order has proven highly resilient in the face of exogenous shocks, individual IOs have undergone significant changes and adaptations over time (Rixen et al., 2016). This has led, in turn, to a new generation of scholarship deepening inquiry into patterns of continuous change (Fioretos, 2017) as a means of resolving the dual empirical puzzle of institutional resilience, stickiness, and transformation (Rixen et al., 2016). Historical institutionalist scholars have begun to investigate the sources of various patterns of incremental change. Whereas proponents of the historical institutionalist model of punctuated equilibrium hypothesize that IOs undergo long periods of stasis, which are then interrupted by short periods of change (Krasner, 1984; Baumgartner and Jones, 2009), other scholars assert that the punctuated equilibrium model of abrupt change cannot capture incremental change (Rixen et al., 2016) within moments of seeming stability (Thelen, 1999, 2003). This has led scholars, in turn, to identify patterns of incremental change: displacement, conversion, drift, and layering (Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). *Displacement* refers to situations in which existing institutions are disbanded to be replaced by new ones. *Conversion* occurs when existing rules remain in place but are deployed and reinterpreted to a new purpose. *Drift* characterizes a situation in which actors fail to agree on updating the institutional design of an IO when shifting circumstances change the social and political effects of old institutions. Finally, *layering* defines situations in which old institutional designs remain in place but new institutional elements are added to existing IOs, enabling them to gradually transform their mandates or organizational structure.

This shift to modes of incremental change allowed historical institutionalists to move from rather static models of path dependence to more dynamic models of change. One of the consequences was that this renewed interest in the origins of path-dependent sequences allowed to conceptualize path dependency as the result of critical junctures—defined as relatively short periods of time that interrupt long periods of stability and set the room for agency and contingency, thus enabling new paths of development (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007). This has resulted in the development of dynamic models of when IOs are more likely to be characterized by continuity or change (Fioretos, 2017). The 2008 global financial crisis illustrates this quite well. Following the crisis, demands for extensive reform and substantial regulation of the financial sector dominated the discussion. Instead, government representatives merely agreed on incremental changes to the global financial system in a way that led to a consolidation and slow transformation of existing IOs, including those deeply implicated in causing the financial crisis (Moschella and Tsingou, 2013). Other scholars underline the distribution of material resources and ideas to explain the continuous support for the neoliberal economic model after the crisis (Drezner, 2014). More recently, Kaya (2015, 26–27) investigated the relationship between the inter-state distribution of economic power and their formal political power in multilateral contexts. This adjusted power approach highlights three factors in the redesign

of multilateral economic institutions: the dominant states' approach to priorities within IOs; the financial burden-sharing arrangements within an organization; and the existing rules and conventions for adjusting political power within IOs.

Scholarship on IOs at critical junctures that might lead to new pathways also investigates timing and sequence as crucial in determining whether temporal mechanisms are in play with respect to change and continuity. Historical institutionalists argue that *timing* (when something happens) may determine what options are available and are selected by actors in IOs, what ideas actors consider (il)legitimate, and under which contextual conditions a certain path is more likely to be followed. By the same token, how reforms in a critical juncture are staggered (*sequence*) may shape the degree to which support can be built and extant institutional designs are more likely to be displaced, converted, or dismissed, or new ones layered on top of old ones (Fioretos, 2017, 16). Posner (2010), for example, finds that the early development of European administrative capacity (timing) and the way in which the European Commission structured international negotiations (sequence) allowed the Union to increase its bargaining power and secure international agreements that were originally opposed by more powerful bargaining partners.

Another important contribution of historical institutionalist studies is that they underline how IOs can produce both positive and negative feedback effects. Negative feedback effects characterize situations where IOs that were once highly valued—for example, World Bank or World Health Organization (WHO)—have lost their attraction and reputation due to abuses of power or agency slack (Grant and Keohane, 2005; Hawkins et al., 2006; Heldt, 2017), corruption (Gray, 2016), lack of transparency and accountability, or declining legitimacy (Moschella and Weaver, 2014; Hanrieder and Zürn, 2017; Heldt, 2018). In global health governance, member states reduced the WHO regular budget enormously from over 80 percent to currently 18 percent, following the discontent of member states with the organization's poor management of several health crises. The retreat of member states from funding global health led the WHO to initiate global public-private partnerships, in particular with philanthropic foundations—including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation—to ensure the financial survival of the organization. With this shift from public to private modes of international cooperation, global governance moves away from a hierarchical system based on formal IOs (Lake, 2011), in which powerful states dominate less powerful members (Abbott et al., 2016), toward informal polycentric systems with multistakeholder partnerships and different degrees of privatization. Today, IOs operate in a highly competitive, complex, and fragmented institutional landscape, in which their role as orchestrators (Abbott et al., 2015) has been weakened and where they try to find their place in a disrupted world. This has served to reinforce the layered nature of governance on health and development issues, to name two of the more prominent policy areas experiencing declining legitimacy.

This overview of the historical contribution to the study of change and continuity in IOs over time shows that there is still a long way to go in this research field. While some studies have attempted to combine historical institutionalism with rational choice and sociological institutionalism (Chwiero, 2008; Vetterlein and Moschella, 2014), we

need more nuanced studies engaged in combining these different perspectives. In their seminal study on pathologies of IOs, Barnett and Finnemore (2004) take a constructivist approach rooted in sociological institutionalism to explain both the power of IOs and their propensity for dysfunctional behavior, defined “as behavior that undermines the IO’s stated objectives” (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, 716). They explore five mechanisms that can lead to dysfunctionality: the irrationality of rationalization, bureaucratic universalism, normalization of deviance, organizational insulation, and cultural contestation. Historical and rational institutionalist approaches would benefit from being more open to the insights of sociological institutionalism. Jupille et al. (2017) contend that historical institutionalism is an important toolbox to help rational institutionalists to identify the conditions under which states decide to use existing IOs or prefer to select from available alternatives and opt instead for new institutional designs in the form of new IOs or less institutionalized forms of cooperation, for example informal institutions (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013) without secretariat or budget. Studying continuity and change within and outside of IOs by adding bureaucratic culture or means (rules and procedures), or exceptions to rules (deviances) might help to explain IOs’ adaptation and transformation (or the lack thereof) over time.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has mapped two different dimensions of time in global governance: the role of time in IOs and IOs in time. Most arguments regarding the impact of temporal dynamics in IOs rely on the assumption that time has an impact on bargaining outcomes, and yet IR scholars have paid less attention to the conditions under which time constraints matter. This chapter is a first step in this direction, mapping six dimensions of time in IOs: time pressure, time discourse, time rules, time costs, time horizons, and time as a resource. International organizations in time is the second field of research examined in this piece. This new field of research has been dominated particularly by a historical institutionalist approach focusing on temporal processes, path dependence, timing and sequencing of decisions, critical junctures, and feedback loops. Scholarship has turned to change and continuity in IOs, drawing mainly on historical institutional theories to share novel insights into the legacies and innovations of IOs over time. So far, studies have investigated why IOs have been characterized by a mixture of significant continuities and important changes over time, and why many additional structures of informal governance have been added to the multilateral order (layering), creating a complex landscape of IOs and more adaptable and flexible informal institutions, such as the G7 or G20.

By situating the study of IOs in time, this piece directly addresses three areas of research. First, this chapter has engaged with the literature on the origin and evolution of IOs, which explores the complementary role that legacies and innovations have played in shaping IOs over time and effects of shifting balances of power in global governance.

Recent work provides a nuanced picture of the role played by emerging powers in shaping core features of the multilateral system. While studies have shown that the fragility of the global economic system has not affected the ability of states to deal with global risks, studies note that similar dynamics have produced new economic organizations that compete with those established at Bretton Woods (e.g., Zürn and Stephen, 2010; Hopewell, 2015; Lipsky, 2017). Further research with a long temporal scope, identifying when and how temporal and institutional variations in the policy-choices at a certain point in time are more likely to impact subsequent developments in IOs, remains a promising avenue for research. Second, this chapter addresses emerging research agendas on innovations in IOs in time, including the addition of informal institutions and practices that are now an integral feature of a dense organizational ecology. Structures such as the G7 and G20 form only part of a large and diverse tapestry of informal organizations (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013). Global economic governance is no longer an affair limited to formal structures such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO (e.g., Stone, 2013; Viola, 2015). While informal organizations are often seen as the converse of formal ones, they often complement them. Finally, this chapter with its focus on historical institutionalist approaches highlights the sources behind continuities and change in IOs.

Pertinent questions for the next generation of research in this field will then be the following: What are conditions of institutional stability and development? Why are some sets of IOs more or less institutionally stable over time? Why do we observe different speeds and scopes of institutional development across cases and over time? How do informal governance arrangements evolve over time? Under what conditions are informal institutions more likely to become formal governance arrangements? (see also Heldt and Snidal, 2019)

These questions are only a few that future research in this field must address. Against the backdrop of current illiberal tendencies, heightened nationalism, and the questioning of multilateralism and IOs, the years ahead will show whether and how the multilateral system will be shaped by these new disruptive tendencies.

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NOTE

1. To be sure, alternative explanations also suggest that deadlocks occur because of domestic political constraints (Young, 2010), balances of power (Narlikar, 2010; Schirm, 2010), or institutional structures (Daunton, 2010).

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CHAPTER 20

TIME AND MORAL REASONING

Contexts, Narratives, and Institutions

PIKI ISH-SHALOM

MORAL reasoning asks what, morally, ought to be done in specific circumstances and how actions are to be morally judged. As such, it is relevant to many circumstances, and furthermore, moral reasoning is usually not conducted in void. It is performed in contexts and by taking contexts into account, including temporal contexts. Contexts are the conditions that form the setting of the situations we wish to evaluate and judge. Temporal contexts are the temporal surroundings and settings of those situations: the temporal spaces that encircle and delineate situations. As part of temporally contextualizing events we look back to search for their genesis; go back until the moment we consider the genesis of the situations we are trying to understand, legitimize, or delegitimize; and go back to encase in meaning the events we find ourselves involved in. It is through this retrospection that we temporalize our existence and the events we attempt to evaluate and legitimize. Then it is from the found/ed genesis onward that the events can unfold forward, shaping the present and making it meaningful to us.¹

The key to understanding the need for temporalization when making moral judgments is the theoretical quality of moral discourse. As such, it is universal and abstract. And there is a gap between the theory and the particular and actual situations that we seek to understand, explain, and evaluate. Temporalization is our means of bridging the gap between theory and theorized situations, and it does so with the assistance of two temporal entities: temporal contexts and narratives. Contexts, and especially temporal contexts, encompass situations and mitigate the gap between abstract and concrete, thus helping to sort out the abundance of data and identify some of it as evaluatively relevant and the remainder as evaluatively irrelevant. Narratives, on the other hand, help us interpret facts when applying theory, order them in chronological and causal sequence, and encase them in social meaning by locating them historically. Contexts and narratives, therefore, tend to temporalize in opposite ways: contexts tend

to narrow down the settings of temporal boundaries, whereas narratives tend to expand them. Contexts operate in a kind of centripetal dynamic, and narratives in a kind of centrifugal dynamic. What these opposing tendencies engender is an interplay of push and shove, creating and recreating a kind of equilibrium between temporal contexts and narratives, which is where the temporal boundaries of the situation-to-be-judged are located: temporal boundaries that are essentially contested.

Temporal boundaries are essentially contested because contexts, and narratives even more, are characterized by fuzziness and indeterminacy, and they can become a subject of adversary. Being essentially contested invites, that is, the political into moral judgment. Hence, the political infiltrates the moral and, instead of a fruitful moral dialogue that may help overcome conflict, we often end up with a moral conflict on top of a political conflict. This leads to a series of morally disturbing questions: Can we really expect to bridge the disagreements over temporal boundaries? Can we expect moral reasoning to facilitate mutual understanding and reconciliation or is it inevitably and eternally doomed to be an academic exercise in futility? Even worse, is morality bound to serve adversarial politics and international conflict? Fortunately, there is some room for optimism, and moral reasoning can, under certain circumstances, be helpful in adversarial politics and international conflicts. I will specify these conditions while focusing on their institutional nature; institutions are the structural environment in and through which moral agents and decision-makers analyze the difficulties, opportunities, interests, risks, and norms that they face. Accordingly, institutional contexts can help to shape moral behavior. As such institutions can help to morally cohere conflicting temporalizations into a more universalized and judgable temporalization as described in the last section.

Relatively little was written on time and moral reasoning and the little that is written focuses mainly on the different moral weight that should be assigned to events occurring on different sequential locations. Such examples can be drawn from just war theory (McMahan, 2015) and from distributive justice (McKerlie, 1989; Brink, 2011). Others accounts exist on how we should consider historical events when reasoning about contemporary harms, or how to justly account for future generations. Considering history is prominent in the literature on transitional and historical justice (Teitel, 2000; Berg and Schäfer, 2009; Hayner, 2011), and the future looms high in environmental and distributive justice, especially on the issue of whether posterity matters or not (De-Shalit, 1995; Barry, 1997; Page, 2006; Gosseries and Meyer, 2009). What we are missing in the literature are theoretical accounts of how our phenomenological experiences of time, and our political experiences and mobilization of time, interact with moral reasoning; how, in other words, moral reasoning and political experience of time constitute each other. This chapter seeks to bridge this theoretical gap and provide such an account.

To reiterate, the existing literature usually treats time as a kind of variable, on which events should be morally weighted differently according to their sequential location: past, present, future. The discussion in this chapter, to which I turn now, treats time, and more so the political experiencing and mobilizing of time as a factor, as a necessary background condition that allows the act of moral reasoning.

JUDGMENT, TEMPORALIZATION, AND ESSENTIAL CONTESTEDNESS

This section analyzes the importance of temporalization for moral reasoning. It starts with examples of the relevance of temporal context to moral reasoning. It then goes on in the next subsections to analyze the importance of temporal contextualization and narratives for moral judgment. It then argues that the interplay of temporal contexts and narratives, as two temporal devices, is what sets the boundaries of temporalization, and sets them as fuzzy, flexible, and essentially contested.

Let us start with a couple of examples before delving into abstract analysis. You are walking in the street and a stranger runs toward you, yelling and waving a knife at you. As he approaches, you need to make a quick decision on how to act or react. This decision may bear grave consequences. You are expected to act on the decision. The action may involve a violent act on your behalf if you feel threatened. The violent act can result in harming a stranger, maybe even slaying him. Your judgment will have to withstand the trial of other moral agents, who will review your decision, action, and the circumstances that engulfed them. They will evaluate the objective and subjective circumstances of the event and will form a reasoned moral judgment concerning your call. They may find your reasoning deficient, and hence you may find yourself punished for manslaughter. All these stages involve practical and moral reasoning. In the aforementioned scenario the circumstances of the event are quite obvious and evaluation and judgment are quite straightforward. It was not unreasonable to feel under mortal threat and act, even kill, in self-defense. However, this is not always the case and life summons us more complicated events; events, that to be able to think and reason about what ought to be done when confronting them and evaluating the actions of those who found themselves in them, requires intricate analysis of the circumstances engulfing them, including the political ones.

Think of the next imaginary scenario, which falls under the umbrella of just war theory, which is seen by some theorists as the projection of self-defense into the international arena. You are a citizen of state X, which is being attacked with rockets by its neighboring state Y. A reserve mobilization is issued, the military summons its full force and strikes back. It is here where just war theory is called on to decide whether the military strike is permissible or not, is it a just case of self-defense or not (along with other stipulations of just war). At first glance, it might seem obvious that in the first scenario we are facing a just and permissible act of self-defense. However, a more thorough analysis may require additional information before a sound moral reasoning can be accomplished. The relevant and required information concerns the issue of responsibility: Who initiated the causal chain that brought about the eruption of violent hostilities? While state X may identify the launching of missiles as the sought after causal trigger state, Y may want to point at another event, say an ambush by state X that killed three of its soldiers a week prior to the rocket attack. You may see the relevancy of this ambush,

yet you can still raise another event, about three years before the ambush, when state Y issued a blockade on state X, preventing essential supplies from reaching state X. State Y admits the blockade being an issue but raises the unilateral annexation by state X of their territory five years prior to the blockade; an annexation that provoked the outcry and condemnation of the international community. We can go on and on, but the lesson is that a lot is at stake when deciding the relevant time frame of moral judgment.

Now think of another example, taken this time from the sphere of distributive justice. John has gambled and lost his fortune. What does the state owe him in terms of welfare? Note that any decision will involve redistributing funds among citizens and hence should not be taken lightly. There are also several theories of justice (Olsaretti, 2018), and though we cannot go into much detail, at least according to some of them, most obviously luck egalitarianism, responsibility is a relevant consideration when deciding who owes whom what. If John acted negligently in losing his fortune, you may want to decide the state owes him nothing (apart from minimal subsistence, to be able to live a decent and worthy life). John may try and bring about a fact from his past, recent or far, alleviating his responsibility, maybe even transferring it altogether to his society or state. He may point at a recent event when he was violently mobbed, causing him severe post-traumatic stress, taking him down the road of drinking and gambling. He can add that the state failed in providing security in the streets and hence is complicit in the robbery that destabilized him. He may want to look a little further in time to a state-sponsored campaign on behalf of casinos, which he fell for and from which the state benefited through heavy taxation. Or he may complain of the lacking education the state supplied him as a youngster, not preparing him well for financial responsibility. We can contest each of John's claims, arguing that he is a moral agent responsible for his own actions, but the issue of temporal framing of the gambling event also sticks out as relevant here, regarding questions of justice and individual responsibility: How far should we go back in time to locate the occurrence that started it all, that is causally responsible for John's bankruptcy in such a manner that burdens John or someone else with the moral and or legal responsibility for the outcomes of his gambling? And it is even more pronounced in questions of global justice and collective responsibilities. This is one of the arguments by Thomas Pogge for global justice and the responsibilities of the developed world for global poverty in the developing world (2005). Among the several arguments for the responsibility of the developed world, Pogge recalls the history of colonialism and how it devastated societies in the developing world, incapacitating them into extreme poverty. A quite distant history is recruited to ascribe responsibility and blame.

One can argue that what these examples demonstrate is not the importance of different framings of time but rather different accounts of causal responsibility and, hence, the temporalizations of the different events are derivative of the question of responsibility, that the temporalization of events is morally redundant. But this would be a mistake. In the previous examples we can trace how the different events are causally related to each other, and we can probably go on and relate them to events even more remote in time. The causal chain may be endless in this sense, temporally extended to times uncounted for. From the present, event A might be seen in causal terms as very secondary

to event B, but closer in time to B, A may well be understood as crucially causal of B. And event C, far removed in time and hence very weakly causally related to A, can actually be causally responsible for B and hence related causally also to A. The causal chain can actually be unbroken. To get to sound moral reasoning we have to break the chain, and we do so by, among other things, temporalization, deciding to put a temporal boundary that helps in making a moral judgment and practical call. This is, for example, the function of clear and present danger in just war that permits preemptive attack but prohibits preventive war. Causal responsibility is crucial, but it becomes helpful only when put in context, temporal context included. Thus, the phenomenological experiencing and, often, also its interaction with the political experiencing are crucial components of moral reasoning.

Judgments and Temporal Contextualization

Moral theory sets out stipulations and criteria for appropriate conduct, and the list is supposedly universally applicable. In other words, it is supposed to be generalizable and cover *all* relevant events and situations, no matter whether historical, geographical, or cultural characteristics. As such, theory has neither need nor room for the particular attributes of situations, only for the attributes that are general and shared: the attributes that can assemble disparate situations into a single categorized phenomenon, theorizable by a single all-encompassing theory. This, of course, collides with the nature of the situations-to-be-judged, whose very nature as “situations,” means that they are composed and characterized by those attributes that set them apart; that make them what they really are: specific, demarcated, and identifiable situations.

This discrepancy seems unbridgeable, yet it is necessary to bridge it in order for theory to be applicable at all. Judgment is the cognitive act of bridging theory with situation. Judgment bridges the gap by applying the universal in the particular (Kornprobst, 2011, 198–199), and the abstract to the actual. Judgment involves taking the universal rules that theory defines and putting them into action in the particular situation we want to judge; it involves equating the abstract expectations created by theory with the actual postures raised when actual situations are confronted. Only thus can we make comparisons between disparate phenomena and say something theoretically meaningful about situations: for example, by evaluating their appropriateness morally; by determining how to manage them efficiently, and in general, by deciding on our attitudes toward them. As Markus Kornprobst argues (2011, 198), following Hannah Arendt, judgment is a human faculty. Judgment assumes agency as that capability “of formulating and undertaking plans of action for which they can be held responsible” (Lang, 2008, 96). But those human agents are never in a void; judgment is made by agents, that is, who interact with the structures in which they are positioned and according to practices, norms, rules and procedures, and also by constraints and opportunities. These constraints, opportunities, practices, norms, rules, and procedures are the making of, among other things, the institutional contexts in which judgments are made; institutional contexts

that help to mediate agents and structures. Thus, institutions are a crucial component of the sociopolitical environment in which agents make their judgments and apply the universals in the particulars, and hence institutions have a crucial function in making judgments and conducting moral reasoning. This importance of institutions will become evident in what follows.

To be able to do all this, and bridge the seemingly unbridgeable, we must employ contexts, including temporal contexts. Contexts are the conditions that form the setting of the situations we wish to evaluate and judge. Temporal contexts are the temporal surroundings and settings of those situations: the temporal spaces that encircle and delineate situations. By temporally encircling situations, contexts mitigate the discrepancies between theory and situations, making it possible, or at least imaginable, to bridge them.

Temporal contextualization, in the sense of circling and delineating the boundaries of the situation-to-be-judged, aids moral judgment and does this in a two-pronged way. First, it shuts off certain data, designating it outside the context and hence irrelevant to the situation-to-be-judged. Second, it sets a relevant and more concrete time framework, thus allowing and facilitating our capacity to identify, collect, and locate the data that relate directly and immediately to the situation-to-be-judged in a way that is theoretically and morally relevant. For example, the most important factors for enabling us to make moral judgment about the resort to war are: understanding the causes of the hostility and violence, recognizing alternative modes of conduct, and understanding the costs and benefits of resorting to war. All these can become available to us once the situations have been temporally circled and delineated, that is, temporally contextualized. That means we must have temporal contexts to help us determine whether the resort to war has indeed met the criteria for being recognized as just, and this includes determining whether a war is a last resort and proportional. In short, moral reasoning is contextually dependent (see also Gorry, 2000, 181).

The contextual dependence of moral reasoning raises two interrelated issues, both of which are responsible for opening up moral reasoning to the political and raise questions regarding the autonomous existence of the moral and the political, between sectarian conflicts and universal values. The first issue concerns the fuzzy nature of temporal contexts, and the second the interconnectedness and interplay of temporal contexts and narratives. Both issues contribute to the essential contestedness of temporalization. The first issue relates to the fuzzy nature of contexts and the indeterminacy of their boundaries—boundaries whose essentially contested nature makes them suitable candidates for the kind of analysis normally applied to political concepts (Gallie, 1956). Contexts can be understood as essentially contested, especially where their boundaries are concerned, which, let us recall, is an essential constitutive feature of contexts. Boundaries, after all, make contexts what they are: temporal (or institutional) spaces that temporally (or institutionally) delineate one situation from the other. But, insofar as contexts' boundaries are constitutive, they also suffer from indeterminacy: we do not have, and cannot have, as the next subsection shows, concrete criteria for identifying those boundaries, for establishing a single determinable, universally agreed, temporal surrounding that allows us to make a universally accepted cognition act of

moral judgment (though as I will point out in the last section, we can design institutional mechanisms that can help reaching, or at least approaching, reasonable agreement over those boundaries of the temporal contexts). Temporal boundaries are by nature fuzzy, rendering contexts essentially contested: (1) they have several possible boundaries, (2) there may be irresolvable disagreements over their appropriate and legitimate boundaries, and (3) those disagreements may be important enough to some parties to become political issues.

In a sense, we temporally contextualize situations by looking backward in time. We look backward in time and trace the unfolding of events until we can identify the genesis of the chain of events that engendered the situation-to-be-judged. That point in time which is recognized as the moment of delineation; the temporal (past) boundary of the situation.

Temporal Contexts, Narratives, and the Boundaries of Temporalization

The question now is, How are context boundaries set? How do conflicting parties determine the temporal boundaries of the events they are involved in? Why does the process of setting context boundaries necessarily result in an essentially contested temporalization? In answering these questions, we turn to narratives, which together with contexts are a key factor in temporization. As argued by Hayden White and others, the human mind conceptualizes itself through narratives and thinks of its existence in terms of narratives that help it maintain a sense of continuity during changing times and circumstances (White, 1980, 5; Sarbin, 1986; Hardy, 1987, 1; Sheaffer et al., 2011, 316–317). According to Alasdair MacIntyre (2007), humans are essentially storytellers and just as they tell stories they also listen to them. They form attitudes by listening to and learning from the stories (whether true or false) they are told. And that is also true in the political realm. Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe succinctly argued that narratives “help us understand ourselves as political beings’ and consequently are an invaluable tool in navigating the myriad of sensations that bombard us daily” (1998, 315). Thus, narratives are not only a literary device, but also a social and political device. Narratives function as roadmaps guiding our individual and collective behavior.

Gerald Prince defines narrative as “the representation of *at least two* real or fictive events or situations in time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other” (1982, 4 [italics in the original]; see also Shenhav, 2006, 247). Accordingly, the important feature of narrative is the sequential representation that links several events or situations. This sequential representation is what relates narratives and temporal contexts, the two being sequential devices necessary for moral judgment.

Earlier, I established the need for temporal contexts to decide which data are relevant when applying moral reasoning. But temporal contexts are not the only sequential device necessary to form moral judgment. To apply theory to real world events, namely to form judgments, we need data like the sequence of events and causal chain

leading to the events. Some of these data may be brute physical facts, and some are social facts. Whether they are physical or social facts: They do not order themselves neutrally into an objective description of reality. Consequently, in order to collect these facts and, even more so, to process them as meaningful and theorizable information (in other words, to be able to use them to judge the justness of the actions of a party to a conflict) an accepted interpretation of the situation-to-be-judged is necessary. Usually, this is one interpretation out of several conflicting and partisan versions. The interpretation of the situation-to-be-judged is based on the stories we are told and produces the stories we tell ourselves and others: in other words, narratives. Hence, narratives are as necessary for moral judgment as temporal contexts. But we must also realize that narratives have another function; they encase events in social meaning, which is due to the nature of narratives and their definition as social and political devices linking several events and situations together. Put differently, narratives have an additional temporal and sequential role, namely to locate the situation-to-be-judged in the historical timeline of societies; to temporalize the situation-to-be-judged not only by setting its temporal boundaries, but by establishing temporal relations with other historical events that the society remembers and narrates. Consider how the Korean War shaped how Americans understood and interpreted the circumstances that led them into the Vietnam War, which, in its own turn and because of Vietnam syndrome and the cancellation of the draft, shaped American normative structure and their initiating of the Iraq War. Think of how Israelis narrated the second Lebanon War through the lenses of the First Lebanon War. Linking events and wars this way involves encasing them with social meanings. Thus, narratives are a temporal necessity for both the unavoidable social reason of encasing meanings and the indispensable moral reason of interpreting relevant data and ordering them sequentially.

The sequential nature of narratives and temporal contexts is therefore not just a point of convergence between them. It is also where they part ways. Inasmuch as narratives and temporal contexts are related due to their sequential nature, they are also obverse in their temporal orientation. Remember that contexts delineate events and narratives relate them. Functionally speaking, contexts tend to narrow the settings of boundaries in order to render them valuable for moral judgment, and narratives tend to expand the settings of boundaries in order to encase them in meanings. Accordingly, contexts have a kind of centripetal dynamic and narratives a kind of centrifugal dynamic. The outcome between the opposing tendencies of these two temporal devices is a dynamic push and shove, creating and recreating a kind of equilibrium between moral functionality and the function of meaning attribution; an equilibrium where the temporal boundaries of the situation-to-be-judged are located.

Narratives are even less concrete and objective than contexts. Being interpretative, fuzzy, elastic, and socially formed, there can be no concrete criteria to measure narratives and set them sequentially. Consequently, there are no concrete criteria to objectively set the temporal boundaries created and recreated by the dynamic push and shove between narratives and temporal contexts. Each party in a dispute or conflict can subscribe to a different narrative and identify a different past moment as the temporal

boundary of the situation-to-be-judged. Put differently, the sequential combination of narratives and temporal contexts fulfills the first two conditions of being essentially contested. They have several possible equilibria and derived temporal boundaries, and irresolvable disagreements can arise over the appropriate and legitimate temporal boundaries. When temporal boundaries are important enough, disagreements can become political issues, in which case the third condition is also fulfilled and the temporal boundaries become essentially contested. Indeed temporal boundaries are often important enough for this to happen. They are important enough because they are essential for identifying the genesis of the events—the event that led to the previously mentioned bankruptcy of John or in another example the resort to war, in other words, the event supplying the cause for war; events where identification is fundamental for evaluating whether that cause is just or unjust. And at times morally judging situations is important enough to render the indeterminacy of the temporalization essentially contested; a fact that brings the political into the realms of moral discourse.

Institutions as Bridging the Political

Thus, we could find ourselves at a moral standstill. Two parties confront each other, each with its own narrative and its own essentially contested temporal boundaries. Armed with their individual temporalizations, each party offers its moral judgments. And although they present it to both their own partisan audience and the adversarial and at times universal audiences, they do so with a moral sensitivity shaped mainly by their own narrative, a moral sensitivity that resonates loudest with their partisan audience; usually at the expense of resonating meaningfully with the other party. We should recall, however, that moral judgment must be universal in scope and acceptance. It will not suffice for one party to feel assured of its own justness, for its own partisan audience to feel morally secure. Moral judgment must cohere through moral argumentation into a broad universal agreement, if not total consensus. When handing down a moral judgment and argumentation the audience is neither partisan nor adversarial. It is universal in scope. However, as the analysis so far shows, not only are expectations of universal agreement unrealistic, the picture is also quite depressing: rather than fruitful moral dialogue that can help reduce conflict, we find a political deadlock. Accordingly, we must ask whether disagreements over temporal boundaries can realistically be bridged? Can we expect normative language to facilitate reconciliation or is it inevitably and invariably an academic exercise in futility? Worse still, is morality bound to serve adversarial politics, especially in international conflict? Fortunately, there is room for optimism and normative language can under certain circumstances be helpful in conflicts.

But how can we ensure that the grounds for such optimism persist and that moral outcomes are reached? How can we bridge disagreements over narratives and temporalizing and how can we use temporalization to reach universally accepted moral judgments? Finally, how can we ensure that normative language can facilitate reconciliation rather than serve the continuation of conflict? The answer to these morally crucial

questions lies in institutions. If I have focused mainly on temporal contexts until now, I now want to briefly examine institutional contexts, the public authorities as the environment in which judgments, argumentation, and decisions are made. Understood in this sense, institutions are the structural environment in and through which moral agents, decision-makers, and politicians analyze the difficulties, opportunities, interests, risks, and norms that they face. Accordingly, institutions can help to shape the behavior of moral agents and their preferences. As such, institutions can help to cohere conflicting temporalizations as described in what follows.

Institutions can do this by overcoming two structural obstacles that prevent agreements over temporalizations. First, they can change the structure of incentives facing moral agents and politicians and dissuade them from advancing only their particularistic interests at the expense of universal interests and norms. Second, institutions can drive interlocutors and political leaders not to target mainly their own partisan and domestic audience and to target universal and international audiences equally instead. Thus, institutions can help to overcome structural obstacles and encourage politicians to try to cohere their conflicting temporalizations into one consensual one, whose narratives are sufficiently neutralized and whose equilibrium and resultant temporal boundaries can be located within the legitimate range and be morally functional. When narratives are neutralized, the equilibrium can produce moral sensitivity, which can resonate clearly with international, universal, and domestic audiences, and thus enable moral judgment that can crosscut the conflicting parties and gain universal acceptance. Where ongoing disagreement exists, institutions can help conflicting parties to reach joint expectations and participate in legitimate arbitration, including international. By legitimate arbitration I mean willingly accepted arbitration by both sides, without coercion and enforcement by the more powerful. In this way, a moral language and argumentation may interweave with the political and the contestation without succumbing to its dictates and adversarial nature. Furthermore, this is how the universal expectations and credentials of morality can be retained and moral relativism prevented.

Expressing these ideas in more familiar theoretical language, this argument follows the neoliberal institutionalism of the 1980s and 1990s, which was led by international relations scholars such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in a series of seminal publications (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Keohane, 1984, 1986, 1989). Note that this theoretical language was developed in the discipline of international relations, and as such it is especially relevant to one of the most difficult kinds of moral reasoning: of the permissibility or impermissibility of the resort to war. Neoliberal institutionalism sought to demonstrate and explain how international cooperation is possible under conditions of anarchy. This theoretical question parallels the question in this chapter concerning how to bridge disagreements over narratives and temporalizing and to reach a universally accepted moral judgment. And the real-world implications of both questions are the same: How can cooperation and morality exist under the threat of anarchy, conflict, and adversity? Not only are the questions related but also the answers are analogically similar, focusing on institutions and their structural implications and effects on political behavior. Institutions have structural facilities that can affect the structure of

actors' incentives through measures and processes such as the shadow of the future, legal instruments and arbitration, regulation, monitoring and enforcement of norms, compliance, disseminating information, learning, third-party involvement, and the gradual building of trust. These measures and processes all help to overcome the two aforementioned structural obstacles that impede the possibility of reaching agreements about temporalizing, hence the link between the theoretical framework presented here and neoliberal institutionalism.

Yet, it should also be noted that the naive heyday of neoliberal institutionalism is over and that institution theorists have also been quick to note the weaknesses of institutions and how internal politics and the international anarchic environment can hamper the goods expected from institutions. This skepticism is evident in several strands of scholarship, such as the literature on institutions as organized anarchies (Cohen et al., 1972), studies of unequal power distribution in institutions (Haftel and Thompson, 2006, 265–266), and especially in the rational design literature, which examines the diversity of institutions and their structural forms (Koremenos et al., 2001; Haftel, 2007). Rational design literature offers two theoretical messages. The first is that there is a reason for the structure of international institutions, which among other things reflects the interests of the institutions' members and the institutions' political function (Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Koremenos et al., 2001). International institutions are the result of (sometimes imperfect) rational design, and the interests of the various members are expressed in such institutional dimensions as membership, scope, centralization, control, and flexibility (Koremenos et al., 2001, 763). Power considerations and partisan politics play a role, and participants rationally design the structure along its various dimensions to suit their own interests and according to their relative power. Here, rationality is of the instrumental kind, in which means are matched to ends. Therefore, notwithstanding the liberal expectations of them, institutions are not necessarily the Habermasian ideal speech situations nor the arena in which the better argument wins the day and communicative rationality presides over instrumentality. And yet institutions are an improvement in harnessing anarchy. Institutions can moderate violence by securing legitimacy (Mitzen, 2005) and structuring the balance of incentives, including when questions of conflicting narratives and temporalizations arise. This last point is linked to the second theoretical message of the rational design literature. Unlike the naive neoliberal institutionalism of the 1980s and 1990s, which sought the conversion of interests, the newer and more nuanced literature also explores the effects of international organizations in cases where an interaction's setting is a conflict of interests. The literature argues that international organizations should be scrutinized for their success or failure in promoting international accommodation within this conflictual setting. And indeed the current literature explores such mechanisms of accommodation as bargaining (Boehmer et al., 2004; Haftel, 2007), networking (Dorussen and Ward, 2008), and understanding the other party's point of view in a conflict (Russett and Oneal, 2001, 164). Given the setting of ongoing conflicts of interests (and narratives and temporalizations), it is argued here that in order to further improve the functioning of institutions, we must also consider a sixth institutional dimension: audience.

Audience is not explicitly mentioned as a dimension in the rational design literature. Yet a constituency or audience is a key dimension and must be considered when designing an institution: the question is how to design an institution so that it achieves legitimacy from its constituency and moreover, how to design institutions as public and transparent fora that affect the balance of incentive and encourage involved parties to appeal morally to universal audiences, rather than exclusively to their domestic and partisan ones. Therefore, we should address not only rational design but also reasonable design: how to design an institution that advances communicative rationality and universalizes the audience and encourages politicians to cohere their narratives and temporalizations with morality in mind. The form of this institution and its structural features apart from public transparency are very important questions, but the task of answering them is beyond the scope of this chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

Moral theory is infiltrated by the political. Moral reasoning depends on temporalization. Two temporal devices—temporal contexts and narratives—help to achieve temporalization. Both provide guidelines that are necessary for moral judgment. Insofar as narratives and temporal contexts are related due to their sequential nature they are also obverse in their temporal orientation. Contexts delineate events, narratives relate them. Functionally, contexts tend to narrow down the settings of boundaries in order to render them valuable for moral judgment whereas narratives tend to expand the settings of boundaries in order to encase them in meaning. Accordingly, there is a kind of centripetal dynamic to contexts and narratives have a kind of centrifugal dynamic. The opposing forces of these two temporal devices create a kind of dynamic push and shove, which creates and recreates an equilibrium between moral functionality and the function of meaning encasement; an equilibrium wherein the temporal boundaries of the situation-to-be-judged are located; temporal boundaries that are essentially contested. Hence, applying moral reasoning and judgment inherently invites the adversarial political and partisan interpretations of facts that constitute the situations-to-be-judged. In other words, there is no escape from the political when morally evaluating situations and moral reasoning is inherently enmeshed with political reasoning. Hence, to realize the potentiality of morality, moral agents should operate in an institution that structurally encourages them to think beyond their own agenda and beyond their own particular interests.

Proper institutions, namely institutions rationally and reasonably designed (including international ones), can overcome the obstacles that impede the possibility of reaching agreements over temporalizing. They do so by changing the structure of incentives facing politicians, and by driving them not to address their own partisan and/or domestic audience predominantly, but to address diverse audiences equally. Thus, institutions encourage moral agents and politicians to try and cohere together their

conflicting temporalizations into one they can agree on, and into a morally functional equilibrium between temporal contexts and narratives. Thus, equilibrium can give rise to a moral sensitivity, which could successfully resonate with universal as well as partisan audiences, and thus enables a universally accepted temporalization and moral judgment.

To be rationally and reasonably designed, institutions should account for six different institutional dimensions: membership, scope, centralization, control, flexibility, and audience. The first five are well explored in the current literature on institutional design (as discussed earlier). They indeed work to improve the manageability and functioning of institutions; helping them to achieve their role in mediating and coordinating different actors, including international actors. The sixth dimension, audience, has not been explored enough in the aforementioned literature and in this chapter I emphasized its role in reaching agreement over the boundaries of temporal contexts. Taking into account the different audiences and their temporal and moral sensitivities will allow institutions to function as a mechanism for cohering narratives and temporalizations between adversarial parties, helping to secure moral reasoning. But much was left unexplored in the chapter, and future research should look into this dimension of the audience and its role in designing institutions, asking how institutions can be designed not only rationally but also reasonably, with morality in mind. With this in mind, many questions should be further explored, including (but not restricted to) which are the relevant audiences to each institution; how those audiences' temporal sensitivities should be accounted for; if and how to account to immoral and unacceptable temporal sensitivities; and the role of third-party mediators in temporal disagreements. These questions and many more are crucial when contemplating the nexus of morality, politics, and temporality; of how, through the need of temporalization, moral reasoning faces the risk of moral relativism, and how we can salvage moral reasoning from this risk.

NOTE

1. This chapter draws on the discussion in Ish-Shalom (2016).

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CHAPTER 21

TIME AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

WAYNE HOPE

IN 2016, the *Washington Post* ran a story entitled “The Radical Plan to Destroy Time Zones” (Taylor, 2016). Readers were introduced to the views of the economist Steve Hanke and the astrophysicist Richard Henry from John Hopkins University. Citing Sanford-Fleming, a Scottish-Canadian railway engineer of the 1880s, they noted that steam and electricity had annihilated distances and made time zones necessary. “Today,” they declared, “the agency of the internet has annihilated time and space completely and has set us up for the adoption of worldwide time” (Taylor, 2016). Back in January 2012, Hanke and Henry had recommended the abolition of all time zones, including the international dateline and daylight savings times, in favor of universal time. They also proposed a new streamlined calendar of 364 days. In stipulated future years, one extra full week would be inserted at the end of December to bring the calendar back into synchrony with the seasons. With these initiatives, they argued that “today’s cacophony of time zones, daylight savings times and calendar fluctuations year after year would be over.” Consequently, “the economy—that’s all of us—would receive a permanent harmonization dividend” (Hanke and Henry, 2012).

This argument is simplistic. As an abstract locution, “the economy” precludes reflection on the capitalist nature of that economy. The very idea of a single world time overlooks evidence that there are different understandings of time, and that they have materialized in different ways over the course of global history (Adam, 2004). Time is a plural phenomenon that is comprised of four epistemes—epochality, time reckoning, temporality, and coevalness. Together, they materialize on a world scale as hegemony, conflict, crisis, and rupture. Against Hanke and Henry, this chapter acknowledges different aspects of time in the context of a capitalist global economy. More specifically, I will explain how the sheer instantaneity of global capitalism obscures its historicity, hegemony, and time-related crisis tendencies, and I will consider collective attempts to rupture the repetitions of capitalist crisis.

TIME, HEGEMONY, AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

It is very striking to see that today we are practically bereft of any thinking of time. For just about everyone, the day after tomorrow is abstract and the day before yesterday incomprehensible. We have entered a period of a-temporality and instantaneity; this shows the extent to which, far from being a shared individual experience time is a construction, and even, we might argue, a political construction.

—Alain Badiou (2008, 105)

From about 1980, a confluence of events and processes brought contemporary global capitalism into being. The international proliferation of neoliberal policy regimes, the collapse of Fordist-Keynesianism, the Soviet bloc, and Cold War demarcations were complemented by the growth of transnational corporations and a global financial system. The new arrangement was enabled by information-communication infrastructures that guaranteed the global ascendancy of real-time immediacy. During the 1990s and early 2000s, telecommunication operators, cable companies, and Microsoft were involved in the laying of fiber-optic cables linking Europe with North America and the United States with Japan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Local fiber-optic networks were concentrated in 150–200 cities worldwide for corporate, government, and other professional users (Winseck, 2002). With these infrastructures underpinning the internet, major corporations could facilitate internal channels of communication via email, e-commerce, intranets, interenterprise computer networking, video conferencing, and mobile telephony.

Satellite television was the first worldwide visual manifestation of real time. Back in 1967, *Our World*, a two-hour live program coordinated by the European Broadcasting Union and edited from the BBC studios in London, reached 500 million viewers in 24 countries (Parks, 2005). The construction of a perpetual global present began with the CNN world report in 1987. By 2003, CNN International had been regionalized into six scheduled channels: North America, Europe, Middle East/Africa, Asia/Pacific, South Asia, and Latin America. As CNN expanded, BBC television developed its own global strategy. A worldwide news channel was formed in 1991 and the “BBC World” brand was launched in 1995 to capitalize on the Corporation’s international profile. Satellites with global reach were complemented by those with pan-regional, national, and subnational footprints, further increasing the availability of 24/7 news coverage. A 2007 survey identified over 100 24/7 channels worldwide. Four were entirely global (CNN and CNNI, BBC World, CNBC, and Bloomberg TV); another 27 could be classified as pan-regional of which Al Jazeera (Arabic and English) had major international reach (Rai and Cottle, 2007).

Global satellite television meshed with other evolving technologies of real time. Wireless infrastructures decoupled computers and communications from fixed locations, which multiplied the locales from which live-ness could be constructed

and received. Laptops could be linked to satellite phones. Images and digital cameras could be edited onto a laptop and transmitted via the internet from the site of a breaking story back to the reporter's central office. Miniature cameras enabled freelancers to obtain vivid footage from disaster sites and conflict zones. Together, these newsgathering innovations normalized the rolling 24/7 news cycle. Evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) multiplied the sites of news reception and remediated the experience of news consumption. Major real-time news events could be streamed through the internet as rolling headlines via specialist news sites. The later arrival of Facebook, Google, tweets, and the blogosphere advanced the scale, portability, and pervasiveness of real-time communication.

Ideological Constructions of Real Time

As television and ICT infrastructures became the real-time nervous systems of global communication, the very historicity of the shift toward global capitalism, financialization, and neoliberalism eluded public description. The economic past of Keynesian social democracy in the West and import substituting development in the global south was rendered invisible. Contemporary media representations of (financially defined) economic activity helped to constitute and naturalize that activity. Financial flows were constantly mediated by news agencies, business news brokers, and business news reportage. Once neoliberal governments opened up national economies to global finance, bankers, bank economists, currency traders, stockbrokers, and investment analysts became the primary sources of economic information. They also provided the flows of information that brought the market economy into existence. Once the economic past was erased, media representations of economic activity merged with the general promotion of business and consumer culture. And, with the arrival of the World Wide Web, a real-time nomenclature emerged within popular business literature. Titles included *The Digital Economy* (1996), *Real Time: Preparing for the Age of the Never Satisfied Customer* (1997), and *Blur: The Speed of Change in the Connected Economy* (1998).

The globalization of real-time electronic communication transformed advertising. Previously, agencies would coordinate campaign planning across specific communication channels (print media, radio, and television broadcasting). Subsequently, commercials were delivered synchronously through layered multimedia channels at any place and time of day. Transnational corporate advertising seamlessly reflected the real-time circuits of global capital and the branding of corporations themselves dominated advertising discourse and imagery. In this environment, everyday practices of consumption accelerated.

From the mid-1990s, MP3 players, digital cameras, internet search engines, handheld remotes, and multipurpose phones opened up new time-saving opportunities for consumers. Personal media technologies were easy to operate, ready to hand, and offered instant access to an emporium of purchasable commodities. Cultural theorist John Tomlinson argues that the culture of consumption shifted from "an emphasis on

steady accumulation and the enjoyment of continued possession” to that of “the immediate and repeated appropriation of new goods” (Tomlinson, 2007, 137). Quickening rhythms of consumption are intimately associated with technological mediations of experience. In this regard, global communication infrastructures combined with personal media technologies allowed branded cultural industries associated with film, music, sport, fashion, celebrity, promotion, and related leisure activities to normalize a sense of now-ness devoid of temporal context (pastness and futurity).

Global Mediations of Real Time

Twenty-two years ago, McKenzie Wark presciently noted that the technological vectors of satellite television were integrally connected with the technological vectors of financial, diplomatic, and military communication. Everyone and everything was, potentially, the “object and/or subject of a mediated relation, realised instantly” (Wark, 1994, 15). Because these vectors implicated the entire globe, there was no synoptic vantage point from which to represent global events. Their constitution and development could not be easily separated from their mass mediation, and mass-mediated, globally transmitted information about an event became inexorably drawn into other media and event-related vectors of communication. This, in turn, activated a process whereby the representations of a momentous event made by journalists, camera teams, editors, and interested parties fed back into the event itself via a global loop encompassing television, radio, telephone, and facsimile technologies. Since Wark’s initial observations, the proliferation of satellite channels, computer-mediated-communication, mobile telephony, and social media has continuously generated intersecting global vectors and feedback loops.

In this environment, unfolding events of substantial magnitude will expand and intensify the interplay of real-time feedback loops. This, in turn, will pervade the lifeworlds of work, domesticity, consumption, leisure, and civil activities. In worst-case scenarios, the scale and immediacy of information flows, image flows, and aural stimuli will overwhelm temporal comprehension of the situation at hand. How events and event clusters play out, and how they are managed, reflects the density of real-time feedback loops across different communicational domains (global, international, transnational, national, local). Locational factors are also important; a financial collapse, military alert, political assassination, or insurrection emanating from a global city will have enormous, multiscalar repercussions. In less networked places such events will unfold less extensively and less prominently.

Denials of Coevalness

The formation of global capitalism polarized the human condition. Wealthy global elites came to enjoy the personal and material advantages of extra-territorial mobility

as the poor were consigned to the secondary experience of locality (as slum dwellers, rural laborers, refugees or office, factory, or domestic workers). Those who benefitted most from the rapid circulation of money, imagery, information, and knowledge inhabited phenomenological worlds that positioned the poor as “out of time.” Here, Johannes Fabian’s critique of Western anthropology, *Time and the Other* (1983), can be reformulated for the present epoch. He argued that such research erased the historical and temporal perspectives of the non-Western cultures under investigation. They were externally characterized through the anthropological lens as backward, traditional, savage, and tribal and/or peasant. This positioning obscured both the epistemic content and the colonizing impact of Western time consciousness throughout the world. The general result, from Fabian’s perspective, was a denial of coevalness—a form of reciprocal communication in which each interlocutor appreciates the other’s sense of time and history. One should add here that denials of coevalness extended beyond the field of anthropology. The calendar and the clock arrived as indicators of civilizational progress when in fact they were constitutive of a Western-imperial time regime (Nanni, 2012). Today, global mediations of a perpetual present unconnected to history or the future obscure the denial of coevalness inherent in structural exclusions of the global poor. In one sense, this is a paradoxical statement. Compared with colonial times, when marginalized populations could not publicly communicate their experiences within imperial metropolises, contemporary depictions of wealth and poverty can be easily accessed by the poorest populations. Images of opulence pervade Hollywood and Bollywood film and high-end advertising for cars, electronic goods, exclusive real estate, and luxury travel. Global, pan-regional, regional, and national flows of 24/7 television news highlight the celebrity lifestyles of world leaders, corporate CEOs, royalty, film stars, writers, artists, musicians, and athletes. League tables of rich and powerful individuals are regularly published worldwide. Meanwhile, the poor and destitute are kept in the lime-light by aid agencies and news media as the victims of floods, earthquakes, famines, disease outbreaks, and insurgencies. With the internet, portable cameras, and videos, vivid depictions of poverty and oppression freely proliferate. However, in a mediated world of unfolding immediacy, the lifeworlds of wealth and poverty are not depicted as being systemically connected. The marginalized poor cannot easily publicize their local experiences of exploitation, exclusion, and dispossession. This process of obfuscation is inherent to global dissemination of consumerist cosmopolitanism. Openness toward peoples, places, and experiences from different cultures and nations is superficially celebrated through branded products and advertising, with images of fashion, food, music, wine, sport, and culturally diverse celebrity figures.

This outlook was also central to corporate branding strategies. The advertising analysts Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson (2011) argue that Benedict Anderson’s conception of an “imagined community” comprised of shared national sentiments has been displaced by a transnational corporate imaginary in which disparate communities form around branded products and services to celebrate global interconnectedness and universal humanism. From a longitudinal analysis of 2,400 television advertisements from corporations in telecommunications, ICTs, finance, biotechnology, energy,

automobile manufacture, aerospace, defense, pharmaceuticals, and corporate consulting, Goldman and Papson discerned a metanarrative whereby “free open and fast communication eliminates all discriminations associated with race, gender, ethnicity and social positioning.” They conclude that such advertising told a “de-historicised story about capital.” It had no apparent source and existed in “the form of grand signifiers that appear to be autonomous in every sense except for their relationship to the individual subject” (Goldman and Papson, 2011, 202). On this account, capitalist denials of coevalness are built into mediated depictions of the global.

CONFLICTS OF TIME WITHIN GLOBAL CAPITALISM

There is a bitter and obscure struggle that involves time and the usage of time.

—Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier (trans., 1999, 6)

The digital fusion of finance and technology, 24/7 global news, electronic vectors of political and military communication, the ubiquity of global corporate branding, and the rapid contingencies of unfolding global events were constitutive of an all-embracing global present. However, this was not a smooth, self-reifying process. Global capitalism was fractured by underlying time conflicts across the interconnected realms of finance culture, worker exploitation, and national/transnational political economies. My explication of these conflicts will be necessarily selective rather than historically comprehensive.

Financialization and Capital Realization

The employment of money to create monetary profit within an M-M circuit is more than a cyclic phenomenon of speculation and collapse, a parasitic deviation from the “real” economy, or a corollary of overproduction and underconsumption. Financialized profit making is co-substantial with global capitalism itself (Marazzi, 2011). Thus, commercial and investment banks, insurance companies, hedge funds, and private equity firms became more than a means of intermediation among businesses. They also took financial positions on the world prices of agricultural, energy, and industrial commodities, and market indices such as exchange rates, interest rates, stocks, and bonds. The purpose was to speculate on changes across multiple indicators over specified periods of time. These were the activities of rentier institutions that profited from the ownership of financial claims rather than underlying assets or commodities. This newly focused financial sector reconstituted the structure and strategy of major corporations, within the United States and globally. Instead of the chief executive officer (CEO) and chief

operating officer (COO) working to generate firm growth and portfolio diversification, hostile firms broke up conglomerates so that component parts could be sold for more than the previous market valuation (Zorn et al., 2004). Other manifestations of financialization included the widening transactional activities of investment banks, the direct engagement of nonfinancial corporations with financial markets, the financial liberalization of banking and monetary policy in developing countries, and the pervasiveness of derivatives trading.

The latter development in particular reveals the time conflicts between financialized profit making and the realization of capital. Traditionally, the unfolding price discrepancies between, say, a government bond, a block of shares, a financial security, or a physical commodity were the basics for a derivatives contract (or related trade) between willing parties. After the collapse of the Bretton Woods currency system, derivatives-based trading became a routine risk management exercise for transnational corporates, merchant importers, export producers, and financial institutions themselves. Derivatives trading could also be a means of pure financial speculation. In this context, derivatives became exclusively connected to the medium of money and its technological means of circulation; underlying assets did not have to be purchased or sold. In 2005, Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee noted that derivatives speculation had become “an autonomous and self-expanding form” and “the planets most profitable and influential market” (LiPuma and Lee, 2005, 412). Capitalists who specialize in derivatives speculation (involving underlying assets or financial products *per se*) use electronic networks to exploit the drive toward instantaneity-simultaneity (real time). Sequential lags of time are reduced and arbitrated to generate speculative profit. This general strategy conflicts with the need to realize capital *over* time. Business-related knowledge found in registries, clearing houses, titles, balance sheets, account statements, and audits is inherently chronological. Calendars and clocks enable the chronological measurement of business performance.

LiPuma and Lee (2005) argue that the construction of a risk-return derivatives position, within an abstract space of financial calculation, is detached from the actuality of economic, political, and social circumstances. Mathematical formulae are used to predict price volatilities across multiple indices. And the likelihood of future events involving governments, political parties, corporations, central banks, private banks, and other financial entities are factored into the relevant derivative and priced accordingly. For LiPuma and Lee, mathematical finance “assumes that society and history play no part in the determination of risk” (2005, 415). I would further argue that the determination of risk eschews social memory as a process which conjoins the past with the present through verifiable, documented knowledge. In other words, the drive toward instantaneity-simultaneity, which shapes electronically driven financial speculation, conflicts with historical and cognitive manifestations of temporality. Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto points out that industrial and commercial development from the mid-nineteenth century required “massive public memory systems to record and classify in rule-bound certified and publicly accessible registries, titles, balance sheets and statements of account” (de Soto, 2011). Such knowledge, in regard to tangible assets

and monetary legal forms “make it possible for investors to infer value, take risks and track results.” Within contemporary global capitalism, the spread of financial derivatives trading weakened these “public memory systems.” Officially, such trades were subject to the rules and records of clearing houses, such as the London International Futures Exchange. Unofficially, however, over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives trading avoided clearing houses and the intrusions of national and supranational regulations.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the degree to which derivatives were being used to hedge against specific risks declined, compared to the use of derivatives for speculation. Without adequate memory systems, it became impossible to determine where risks were being held and how they were proliferating. The consequent dangers were recognized by Brooksley Born, chairperson of the US Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). Writing in 2001, she recounted that “the lack of basic information about the positions held by OTC derivatives market participants, the nature of their investment strategies and the extent of their risk exposures potentially allow them to take positions that may threaten the regulated markets without the knowledge of any federal regulatory authority” (Born, 2001, 636). Lack of transparency had contributed to the failure of Barings Bank in 1995 and the demise of long-term capital management (LTCM) in 1999.

In light of these events, Born (2001) proposed an end to OTC derivatives trading, against fierce opposition from private financial institutions, the Federal Reserve, President Clinton’s Treasury Department, and the Securities Exchange Commission. They sought, successfully, to legally exempt OTC derivatives from the purview of US and international regulators. Born’s subsequent resignation from the CFTC signified the triumph of real-time presentism over temporality within global financial markets.

Worker Exploitation and Time Conflict

For capitalist enterprises, calculations of profit and labor productivity have long depended upon the standard reckonings of clock time. The process is delineated in E. P. Thompson’s seminal article “Time, Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism” (Thompson, 1967). In nonindustrial economies centered on hunting, farming, fishing, and trade, work is task-oriented and embedded within the social fabric of family, tribe, village, and town. By contrast, timed labor requires the synchronization of work tasks. This emerged in eighteenth-century England as small, domestically based workshops developed simple divisions of labor. The eventual arrival of machine-powered industry in the mid-nineteenth century required greater exactitude in time routines and a more substantial synchronization of labor processes.

In Western economies from about 1890, Frederic Taylor and his followers broke down labor processes into simple complementary tasks so that managers could eliminate periods of inactivity and rest time from the working day. Henry Ford built upon Taylor’s work by introducing a moving assembly line with labor-saving machinery, interchangeable automobile parts, and standardized job tasks. Subsequent refinements of

the system, within and beyond the car industry, advanced productivity and established a new kind of clock-time discipline; programmed industrial machinery, rather than clocks and stopwatches, ultimately set the pace of work. In American, West European, and Japanese factories of the 1970s, microchip computers and robotics began to drive assembly lines. These and other technologies enabled the development of “lean production,” a system of task integration, worker flexibility, and teamwork psychology. The general purpose was to “accelerate the entire factory”; to this end, special time study software allowed “management to simulate the production process and test different compositions and tasks” (Hermann, 2014, 71). Lean production became integrated within just-in-time (JIT) delivery systems whereby parts were delivered to the assembly line as they were needed. Levels of output across different product types were matched with variations in consumer demand. These real-time operations enabled transnational corporations to ratchet up clock-based rates of labor exploitation worldwide.

Transnational corporations thereby profited from intergeographic discrepancies in the cost of labor. In 2006, Morgan Stanley’s chief economist Stephen Roach noted that the emergence of a new global labor arbitrage was acting as a “powerful structural depressant” on wage levels in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Offshore outsourcing platforms, already established in manufacturing, were shaping the services sector from “low value added transactions processing and call centers to activities with a high intellectual capital content such as software planning, engineering design, accounting, actuarial expertise, legal and medical advice and a broad array of business consulting functions.” The extraction of production and/or services from low-wage workers in the developing world was a routine profit-maximizing strategy (Roach, 2006).

The streamlined logistical operations of global labor arbitrage constituted the interface between the real-time managerialism of transnational corporates and the clock-time exploitation of labor. Historically, industrial capitalism’s need to shift products faster, further, and more cheaply had incorporated the labor of warehouse stackers, drivers, seafarers, port, airline staff, and many other workers. One researcher remarks that the new logistics utilized “electronic communication to integrate all forms of transportation with systems of wholesale trade (or distribution) in order to deliver products immediately, if not instantaneously, in response to market demand” (Sealey, 2010, 28). This, in turn, required subcontracted workforces flexible enough to absorb redundancies, increases or decreases in work hours, and shorter spans of “downtime.” For transnational processing and call center work, transnational corporates constructed a 24-hour business cycle by exploiting the time zone differences between geographically disparate labor pools. Within local labor processes and workplaces, time arbitrage entailed the extension of work hours and/or the acceleration of work activities.

The real-time/clock-time ratchet of labor exploitation threatened temporal autonomy within and beyond the workplace. Empirically, temporal autonomy equates with the discretionary time, which remains after deducting the time taken for paid labor and personal care. Unconstrained labor exploitation manifested in low wages, increased workflow, and workplace surveillance damages the biotemporal routines of workers and the sociocultural temporalities of working-class communities. Under global capitalism,

neoliberal deregulation of nationally established labor laws led to the implementation of irregular and flexible work schedules. And the relocation of Western assembly plants to Mexico, South Asia, and China increased the incidence of work-related diseases, workplace injuries, and premature deaths (Fischer et al., 2004). For Chinese manufacturing workers arriving from the countryside, temporal autonomy was entirely precluded by the establishment of dormitories in and around factory compounds. Communal multistoried buildings contained shared bunkrooms and facilities without provision for private spaces. Individual workers, often young single migrant women, were separated from families and expected to adjust to unfamiliar surroundings on a short-term contractual basis. Such arrangements attested to a “dormitory labour regime” in which JIT disciplines of production work were complemented by direct managerial control over the daily reproduction of labor power in accommodation, food, travel, and leisure pursuits (Ngai and Smith, 2007).

Class exploitation within global capitalism can also be understood as a denial of coevalness. In this context, Ankie Hoogvelt observed a configuration whereby 20 percent of the world was able to borrow funds (wealthy elites, securely employed professionals, and waged workers). Other wage earners, informal workers, service providers, and their families lived precariously. The outer layer of the world’s poor was individually expendable and a structural depressant on global wage levels. Their temporal experiences and sensibilities became the unrecognized “other” to global capitalism’s operating logic of internetworked real time (Hoogvelt, 2006).

Systemic denials of coevalness often entailed extra-economic coercion of precarious workforces and surrounding communities. Such is evident in the establishment of migrant labor regimes whereby states, in collaboration with transnational corporates and financial institutions, deliberately create workforces without full citizenship protection in order to sustain a globally competitive export niche. Examples include the demarcation of export processing zones by Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and other South East Asian governments. Gulf States, notably Dubai, constructed indentured labor regimes comprised of South Asian contract workers and South East Asian domestic services. Meanwhile, undocumented African mineral workers have endured slave-like conditions to produce the raw materials necessary for the production of cell phones, laptops, light bulbs, and cars (Davis, 2007; Fuchs, 2013).

Political Economies of Time Conflict

In an epoch shaped by global finance, transnational corporations, and world-spanning production networks, it cannot be assumed that national economies and national polities are integrated wholes. What has actually emerged is a twin set of time conflicts; the national state versus global capital and the national polity versus the transnational state.

Conflicts of time reckoning between nation states and global capital were notably apparent during the South East Asian currency crises of the late 1990s. Major Western

banks had poured short-term loans into the financial centers of the region's national economies as hedge fund operators exploited the time arbitrage opportunities arising from unfolding exchange rate differentials.

In this scenario, the real-time world of financial speculation impinged upon the sequential decision-making processes of South East Asian governments and their central banks. They could only respond reactively to the unexpectedness, tempo, and simultaneity of unfolding events. Currency collapses, property market crashes, stock market falls, liquidity contraction, bankruptcies, fiscal shortfalls, and associated political controversies undermined national capacities for economic management. Successive attempts by governments in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and South Korea to defend the national currency, stabilize the financial sector, and calm local populations merely intensified the mediated reflexivity of unfolding events. Clashes between the presentist, real-time reckonings of speculative finance and the reactive, sequential decision making of besieged Asian governments reflected a deeper time conflict. Countries which had previously liberalized financial services and investment regulations did not have the temporal authority to resist the real-time incursions of global finance. By contrast, the governments of China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Singapore were less vulnerable to the effects of hedge fund attacks, currency fluctuations, and financial pull-outs. They had maintained capital controls, a necessary condition for state temporal authority within global capitalism (Klein, 2007).

The worldwide privatization of state and public assets also threatened the temporal precepts of state authority. In a state-facilitated national economy, energy enterprises, telecommunications, electricity transmission, transport networks, and health and education services are supposed to operate over a long period of time in response to long-range socioeconomic needs. Under privatized ownership these same enterprises, networks, and services were reorganized to fit the short-term imperatives of commercial profit. The state thus lost the temporal authority to shape infrastructural development for national purposes.

The declining temporal authority of national states coincided with the prevalence of a transnational state network comprised of supervening policy development organizations (the International Chamber of Commerce [ICC], the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Conference, the World Economic Forum, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development); elite international gatherings (the G7, the G8, the G10, and the International Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]); and major institutions of governance (the World Trade Organization [WTO], the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund [IMF], and the Bank of International Settlements) (Robinson, 2004). It is crucial to appreciate that this general apparatus incorporated the executive reaches of those nation states committed to neoliberal policies. Officeholders within finance ministries, policy advice groups, and the senior civil service sought to match national economic objectives with the priorities of global finance and transnational corporations. The transnational state was designed to overrule or circumvent national traditions of democratic government, electoral mandate, judicial process, legislative deliberation, and public debate. Consequent tension between the national

polity and the encroaching transnational state differed from country to country. And how these tensions played out was largely contingent upon the intranational political culture (as positioned on the continuum from strict authoritarianism to formalized democracy). In all cases, however, conflicting principles of time were at state. Such was evident during the South East Asian currency collapses of 1997–1998. As capital outflows drained foreign reserves, the IMF offered loans to South East Asian governments which were conditional upon the institutionalization of finance sector restructuring, the privatization of state assets, and current account deficit reduction (through the maintenance of high interest rates).

Meanwhile, liberal democratic polities battled with the transnational state for control over chronologically unfolding events. Executive state structures committed to neoliberal priorities confronted the uncertainties of electoral outcomes, parliamentary process, and democratic will formation. Schedler and Santiso's discussion of "tempo" is especially relevant here (Schedler and Santiso, 1998). To the extent that political decision making requires opposing parties to give consent, the pace of persuasion sets the pace of change. In this regard, the tempo of political processes may be quickened by the real-time pressures of capital markets and/or the sudden impact of neoliberal shock therapy (Klein, 2007).

Political democracy is more than a struggle over chronological time, timetables, and the use of tempo. William Scheuerman argues that liberal democracy, as such, is shaped and divided by a temporal separation of powers. Thus, representative assemblies deliberate upon legislation that is prospective (future oriented), judicial activity is retrospective (past oriented), and executive actions are contemporaneous (present oriented). When these different temporal emphases fall out of balance, liberal democracy becomes fragile. Fast, executive decision making, for example, can overrule prospective deliberation within the legislature and precedent-guided due process within the judicial system (Scheuerman, 2004; and see Scheuerman's chapter in this volume). Against this background, Scheuerman's discussion of "globalisation and the fate of law" is illuminating. He defines the rule of law as clear, public, prospective and stable; "judicial authority should be equally applied, power holders should be legally accountable and all parties to legal proceedings should receive fair notice" (2004, 184). Clearly, these were not the requirements of global capital or the transnational state. Institutional investors, currency traders, and hedge fund operators preferred an open-ended legal environment conducive to fast transactions. Transnational corporations, commercial lawyers, and government officials worked to neutralize the declared regulatory capacities of nation states and advance informal modes of conflict resolution via arbitration, mediation, and/or conciliation. Scheuerman comments that "states need increased generality, consistency and stability within international regulation in order to preserve their integrity whereas privileged economic interests oftentimes seem perfectly happy with legal inconsistency and irregularity among states forced to court them" (2004, 169). The critical point here is that legal inconsistency and irregularity are fostered within institutions that operate according to short flexible time horizons. The WTO, for example, entered agreements which contained exceptions, waivers, vague clauses, loopholes, and sectoral

exemptions. Ad hoc dispute resolution procedures outstripped nation-based processes of formal legality. Additionally, WTO tribunal meetings were confidential, and all associated documents contained opinions that were anonymous. In short, “soft” law usurped the rule of law, a process that was enhanced whenever state elites circumvented their legislatures to negotiate multilateral or bilateral trade and investment agreements. The international proliferation of such agreements reinforced temporal incongruities within liberal democratic polities.

TIME, CRISIS, AND GLOBAL CAPITALISM

I just can't make new memories.

—Leonard Sheeby (in the 2000 film *Memento*)

It is now pertinent to consider how and why the time conflicts of financialized capitalism triggered a global financial crisis in 2008. On my assessment, the conflict between real-time M-M circuits and the clock-centered chronological requirements of capital realization *over* time became unmanageable. The same can be said of the conflict between presentist risk modeling and temporal understanding in regard to financial speculation. Why, then, did these conflicts head toward flashpoint? Why were financial dangers allowed to accumulate? From the vast financial crisis literature, four contributory factors stand out: the power of investment banks; the securitization of household debt; the spread of mortgage derivatives; and the global connectivity of these developments. They came together in a perfect storm in September 2008. After outlining this process, I will provide a time-epistemic summation of how the crisis played out.

The Perfect Storm

From the mid-1980s, investment banks undertook proprietary trading in financial and other assets while lending to other bodies for *their* trading activities (e.g., financialized corporations, hedge funds, private equity groups, structured investment vehicles [SIVs]). This lender-trader strategy allowed banks to buy and sell all kinds of assets and derivatives to generate, and then exploit, unfolding price differentials. Here, Peter Gowan has outlined a standard Wall Street strategy that became the rationale for top echelon investment worldwide. The steps are as follows: first, enter a particular market to generate a price bubble; second, make large speculative profits; third, withdraw, collapse the bubble, and enter a new market (Gowan, 2009, 9–10). This sequence accounts for the crucial, underlying role of investment banks in the 1990s currency bubbles (in the United Kingdom, Russia, Mexico, and the South East Asian economies), the late 1990s dot.com boom, and the early 2000s housing bubble (especially in the United Kingdom

and the United States). Critically, Gowan notes that arbitrage and bubble blowing required banks to mobilize huge funds by maximizing their leverage ratio. Thus, if the securities and equity held by a bank rose in value relative to its debt, then further debt would be taken on to purchase more securities (so as to maintain the leverage ratio). For the bank, this tactic generated sufficient funds to move markets and shift price differentials in a favorable direction. Alternatively, however, a decline in the value of securities and equity holdings could leave the bank overleveraged and financially vulnerable (Gowan, 2009, 10–13).

Overall, investment banking represented the institutionalization of real-time M-M circuits of speculative profit making. This general process was revealed by another key facet of financialized capitalism: the shadow banking system. Investment and commercial banks were prime brokers for major hedge funds, private equity firms, and SIVs engaged in speculative arbitrage and OTC derivatives trading. Furthermore, participants in these activities were required to hand over collateral to the banks (they used part of this collateral to raise funds for their own speculative activities). Within shadow banking, the engineering of increasingly sophisticated financial instruments to leverage credit was designed also to circumvent regulations (such as these established by the US Commodity Futures Trading Commission). These observations remind us that the instantaneity and simultaneity of the speculative process, guided by computer modeling, was at odds with the slower sequential requirements of capital adequacy ratios, inter-bank settlement procedures, and market surveillance practices (undertaken by designated market authorities).

Meanwhile, Anglo-American homeowners moved away from intermediated, bank-centered loan services toward the disintermediated buying, selling, and trading across financial markets. As Paul Langley has observed, this general transition was facilitated by the emergence of asset-based securitization (ABS). Borrowings to finance the purchase of houses, cars, holidays, and consumer goods appeared on lender balance sheets as “assets.” Designated pools of assets accrued to the lender were transferred to a special purpose vehicle (SPV). This vehicle facilitated the sale of packaged assets to third parties under specific conditions at an agreed price. Mortgages became the largest asset group subject to securitization. Householder debts were packaged into commodifiable, tradable “assets.” Within each package, debts were ranked according to the likelihood of repayment (prime, Alt A prime, subprime) (Langley, 2006).

Eventually, the securitization of mortgages and the leveraging of household equity converged with the financial practices of shadow banking. Between 2000 and 2005, investment banks purchased enormous amounts of prime and subprime mortgage debt and repackaged it into collateralized debt obligations (CDOs). Each CDO contained thousands of mortgages that were ranked according to the risk of default. Banks and mortgage brokers profited especially from the securitization of subprime revenue streams. Investment banks insured securitized subprime mortgages with credit default swaps (CDSs). Unlike conventional insurance, CDS contracts were not directly regulated and could be freely traded without transferring ownership of the underlying debt. During the subprime boom, AIG, the world’s largest insurance company,

mass-produced CDSs for investment banks and related counterparties throughout the shadow banking sector.

In a world of shadow banking, household mortgage securitization, mortgage derivatives, and speculative insurance practices, all major participants contributed to a precarious financial situation. At the time, Robin Blackburn noted that the sheer complexity of CDOs and CDSs generated risks, including documentation risk, operational risk, ratings risk, counterparty risk, liquidity risk, and linkage risk (Blackburn, 2008). From a temporal perspective, contributors to the mortgage derivatives market collectively magnified uncertainty about what the future might bring. However, within mediated financial environments of simultaneously unfolding transactions, the consequences of growing uncertainty were not fully appreciated.

Between 2000 and 2007, financialized capitalism eschewed temporal awareness of its own worsening predicament. There were no international efforts to regulate shadow banking or stabilize credit markets. The 2007–2008 financial collapse changed this situation. Initially, a worsening slump in CDO/CDS markets became internationally apparent. Shadow banking practices became exposed, and this threatened the entire business model of investment banks. The failure and rescue of Bear Stearns in February 2008 and the demise of Lehman Brothers in September that same year disrupted global credit networks and triggered worldwide falls in stock prices. For the central players involved, the experience of financial collapse was intersubjective, reflexive, and incapable. The Lehman's bankruptcy of September 2008 was a global news event that sent panic waves through the multi-billion-dollar commercial paper and short-term money markets. Within 36 hours, collapsing stock markets wiped US\$600 billion off global equity prices. Lehman's demise triggered bank failures and a full-scale banking crisis throughout the United States and Western Europe.

Between the fall of Lehman Brothers and the eventual introduction of the Troubled Asset Relief Programme (TARP) into the US House of Representatives and the Senate, the global financial system was afflicted by radical uncertainty. Investment bank business models had failed, and the short-term financial future was beyond calculative prediction.

Time, Crisis, and Repetition

In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe, massive write-downs of financial assets effectively reduced bank lending and credit lines to large-, medium-, and small-scale firms. Cuts in production, massive layoffs, and increased unemployment drove down consumer spending, which forced all kinds of businesses to close. Reduced credit flows and falling aggregate demand in large Western countries diminished export returns throughout East Asia. China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore sold fewer consumer durables, electronic goods, and software products to North American and European consumers (Gumbel, 2009). Together, these trends sharply reduced world commodity prices for minerals, agricultural products, manufactured goods, and

various services. This affected poor countries in Africa, Central Asia, and the South Pacific, since they were dependent on one or a few of these commodities for export returns. Concurrently, rising unemployment in Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America slowed remittance flows from migrant workers to their home countries (Karshenas, 2009). By April 2009, across all developing regions, the financial crisis had driven more than 50 million people into extreme poverty.

Worsening global-economic conditions triggered the sense that history had changed. However, the historical significance of unfolding events was open to multiple interpretations. On my reading, a full-blown crisis of financialized capitalism certainly occurred. Global capitalism as an epochal system was not seriously threatened, but the possibility of a larger financial meltdown incorporating the too-big-to fail banks became apparent. Such a scenario, in a world where the density and scale of real-time electronic networks are rapidly advancing would be system threatening. Of course, whether or not global capitalism is replaceable by another system is a matter of political intervention and mass consciousness. On this matter, it is important to acknowledge Peter Osborne's insight concerning the temporal ambiguity of crisis. In one sense, he argues, instantiations of crisis are a precondition for the possibility of the new. This could involve new forms of social production, new relations of production, and new forms of political-administrative organization. Public comprehension of these possibilities would depend on struggles for "the reappropriation of the collective powers of social labour" (Osborne, 2010, 21). Progress in this regard raises the prospect that a given conjuncture of crisis may precipitate radical changes to the capitalist system. In another sense, a crisis may be characterized by its incapacity to usher in the prospect of the new. Thus, official attempts to ameliorate a structural crisis of capitalism may simply restore the earlier conditions of capital accumulation that had become unsustainable. The preconditions for the next crisis are thereby established and a process of repetition unfolds (Osborne, 2010). Osborne's temporal acuity serves to illuminate the financial crisis and its aftermath.

On October 13, 2008, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson held a meeting with representatives from nine surviving banks: Bank of America, Bank of New York Mellon, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, State Street, and Wells Fargo. They received their first TARP instalments and were promised a blanket government guarantee for the insurance of bonds and debt instruments (Johnson and Kwak, 2010). Over the next 12 months, the sum total of bank bailout funds from the Federal Reserve, the Treasury, and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) exceeded US\$12 trillion (Prins, 2009). In one sense, this signaled the demise of the highly leveraged investment banking model that had dominated American and global capitalism. Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, for example, became bank holding companies temporarily dependent upon taxpayer-funded largesse. Eventually, however, they benefitted enormously from cheap bailout money, reduced competition, and the knowledge that the government would not let another major bank fail. President Obama's Financial Reform Act of July 2010 did not require large investment banks to spin off internal hedge funds or direct derivative trading operations through established

open exchanges. The Reform Bill's major organizational creation—the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—was merely a branch of the Federal Reserve framework, which was administered by former investment bankers (Taibbi, 2012).

Reproducing the Time Conflicts of Financialized Capitalism

In September 2009, the G20 conference in Pittsburgh agreed that all over-the-counter derivatives trading should occur on regulated exchanges. As major financial institutions strenuously resisted such initiatives, the preconditions of further financial volatility were established. In this context, the conflict between real time and clock time intensified. Within equity trading environments, institutional investors, such as mutual funds, pension funds, and insurance companies, employed execution algorithms at ever-advancing levels of sophistication. Large share orders could be divided into equally sized parts and electronically programmed to anticipate fluctuations and cycles in trading volume. Proprietary trading algorithms exploited differences between quoted prices of the same shares across different markets as well as between equity derivatives and the underlying shares. Such techniques could also be employed to place multiple orders without executing them. The resulting rise or fall of prices could then be quickly and profitably exploited. In the United States, advances in algorithmic trading benefitted investment banks, hedge funds, and an emergent cluster of high-frequency trading firms (HFTFs). Together and in competition, they exploited an M-M profit circuit dependent upon ever-increasing trading speeds and the contraction of sequential time. From 2001 to 2011, the average speed of order execution on the New York Stock Exchange fell from 20 seconds to 1. On some trading platforms, the lower limits of trade execution reached 10 millionths of a second. New frontiers of speed were opening up a world of zero latency in which trading converged on its natural limit, the speed of light. As competition between rival trading algorithms reduced the human element, share prices oscillated sharply regardless of underlying company performance (Haldane, 2011; McKenzie et al., 2012).

In an environment of radical uncertainty, sudden price movements could emerge without warning or obvious cause. The size and duration of future fluctuations were beyond calculative rationality, as were the likely repercussions. These conditions underlay the “flash Crash” of May 6, 2010. Following a period of intense, high-frequency trading in particular shares, the Dow Jones Industrial Average plummeted by 600 points, and then 400 points, before recovering 15 minutes later. About US\$1 trillion was lost in half an hour, an event without precedent in share market history (Haldane, 2011). The “Flash Crash” exemplified the worsening conflict between clock time and real time and between presentism and temporality. The volume, flux, and near real-time speed of price movements undermine the business rationale for trading decisions, especially when major orders are placed but not executed. As trading speeds accelerate into the realm of nanoseconds, the dispersal of trading venues and data banks exposes the fact that clock time cannot be absolutely synchronized across different locations. In this

situation, the algorithmic drive toward real time undermines the chronological reliability of clock time and the temporal ground for ascertaining the difference between past, present, and future in financial trades. General overreliance on machine trading at the expense of human cognition erases memory, futurity, and learning capacity from financial markets. Consequently, small, untraceable pricing anomalies and technical malfunctions will continuously generate disastrous results. If a future “Flash Crash” coincides with and/or is precipitated by another financial crisis, the global ramifications could be unmanageable.

Austerity Politics and the Reproduction of Time Conflicts

As official attempts to remedy the financial crisis reproduced the time conflicts of financialized capitalism, the burden of crisis shifted to governments, national polities, and their activities. In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe, debt-ridden banks were recapitalized out of tax revenues and the sale of government bonds to financial institutions. In doing so, governments incurred rising levels of interest-laden debt. In short, the bank debt that had triggered the financial crisis morphed into a sovereign debt crisis. Financially indebted countries had few resources for large-scale credit creation. Within the European Monetary Union, the largest banks took on derivatives positions against the most indebted economies: Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland. If governments required IMF and/or private bank loans, investors and analysts calculated whether or not conditionality provisions would be met. As the sovereign debt crisis of each country unfolded, the European Central Bank (ECB) and ruling elites of major economies preserved the portfolios of major banks by demanding stringent, country-specific structural adjustment programs. The inevitable results were uncontrollable recessionary spirals, worsening poverty, social dislocation, and mass political protests.

The unequal struggle between markets and states raises wider concerns about the interrelationships between markets, states, and democratic polities within and outside the European Monetary Union. In this regard, Wolfgang Streeck’s critical analysis allows us to explore the time conflicts at stake. Under conditions of austerity, nation states cannot mediate between the rights of citizens and the requirements of capital accumulation. Consequently, their capacity for memory and futurity has been truncated. In 2014, Streeck noted that for governments “too many things have to be tackled at once, short term fixes get in the way of long term solutions; long term solutions are not even attempted because short term problems take priority; holes keep appearing that can only be plugged by making new holes elsewhere” (Streeck, 2014, 97). From this account I would argue that the short-termism of financial markets has colonized the executive branches of nation states and disconnected them from the distinctive temporal practices of democracy embedded within legislatures, judicial processes, and election campaigns. Meanwhile, national economies fracture and social experience becomes polarized. Propertied elites and the upper middle classes with access to funds deny

coeval recognition to those citizens who are structurally unemployed or in precarious work. It seems, then, that governments have no further policy resources with which to buy time and secure social peace. The restoration of financialized capitalism has incapacitated political possibilities for the new, and it has increased the possibility that a further financial crisis will be beyond amelioration.

From October 2008 to April 2009, constituent elements of the transnational state (supranational institutions, financial-corporate advisors and lobbyists, and large nation-state elites) worked to restore financialized circuits of profit making and ameliorate the effects of global recession. The scale and complexity of the crisis compelled the transnational state to accommodate ruling elites from large, emergent economies, such as Brazil, India, Russia, and China. However, new, expanded decision-making bodies, such as the G20, simply reinforced the time conflicts between the transnational state and various national polities. The sense of emergency that pervaded transnational state gatherings precipitated fast, collusive decision making on vital matters at the expense of all other deliberative bodies at international, national, and local levels. The World Economic Forum, the IMF, the World Bank, financial-corporate lobbyists, and ruling elites from major nation states circumvented the concerns of those worst affected by financial meltdown and global recession (Buxton, 2010).

Counterpower and Rupture

From 2007 to 2011, a worldwide concurrence of militant events, activities, and movements focused upon local-regional manifestations of global capitalist inequalities. In 2007 and 2008, increases in commodity prices, including food staples, triggered civil disruption across Africa. Mass disturbances occurred in Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, Cameroon, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Egypt, Madagascar, Somalia, and Tunisia. They presaged the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and other Middle Eastern countries in 2010 and early 2011 (Berazneva and Lee, 2013). Meanwhile, across Spain, a major strike and anti-austerity protest movement forged transnational links with participants from workers' movements in Argentina, Italy, Chile, and Greece. This eruption of anti-austerity populism coincided with student protests in Santiago, London, and Quebec, and inspired the Occupy Wall Street movement (Castañeda, 2012; Foran, 2014). In 2010, a wave of strikes in Chinese factories coincided with protests by Bangladeshi garment workers in a major export processing zone and a general strike of public sector workers and mine workers in South Africa (Silver, 2014). Trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, and informal worker organizations at local and national levels developed transnational solidarities. In February 2011, a General Council Meeting of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) adopted a resolution calling for a range of actions to support those in precarious and informal work worldwide. They included substantive demands for sociolegal protection, higher minimum wages, training opportunities, and the regulation of temporary work and labor migration agencies (Bonner and Spooner, 2011).

Together, these rebellions, protests, strikes, and uprisings did not threaten global capitalism or redress its inherent inequalities. However, given that solidarities of militancy did arise, it is worth discussing how they might be politically advanced. In my view, this will require an organized labor movement with the capacity to disrupt just-in-time supply chains, multilevel alliances among organized labor, the precariously employed, and the wageless poor, and a reformation of a global protest movement explicitly focused upon the delegitimization of global financial elites. This counterpower coalition must also include a transnational alliance of populist anti-austerity movements with the capacity to claim local and state power in different countries. The purpose of this coalitional formation is to coordinate networked simultaneities of action such that new solidarities of hope can be created and global capitalism's logic of crisis repetition can be ruptured.

CONCLUSION

It is misleading to assume the existence of a single worldwide time or a harmoniously experienced global economy. These very formulations overlook the pluralities of time and the divisiveness of capitalism. In contrast, my analysis has explored the double relation between time and global capitalism. The four epistemes identified—epochality, time reckoning, temporality, and coevalness—together represent a critical-theoretical framework for analyzing the materializations of global capitalism. Conversely, global capitalism, as such, creates various formations and experiences of time that are hegemonic, conflictual, and prone to crisis and collective opposition. It is difficult to translate these insights into public knowledge. Information and communication technologies facilitate global flows of immediacy, instantaneity, and ever-presentness that elide global configurations of power. However, as I have argued, global financial crises are recurring and unmanageable. They expose the time conflicts of global capitalism, potentially embolden collective opposition, and raise the prospect of new times to come.

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PART IV

TIME AND
POLITICAL THEORY

CHAPTER 22

TIME AND THE SEPARATION OF POWERS

WILLIAM E. SCHEUERMAN

THE separation of powers is widely viewed as one of the intellectual and institutional pillars of modern liberal democracy. First articulated by prominent figures within early modern European political thought (most influentially, the Baron Montesquieu [1689–1755]), and soon a rallying cry for critics of European absolutism, the deceptively simple idea of a tripartite—legislative, executive, and judicial—division (or separation) of institutional sites (or powers) has since become a mainstay of liberal democratic theory and practice. Like other core elements of modern political thought and experience, the separation of powers remains an object of intense controversy among jurists, political scientists, social philosophers, and, of course, political elites and their allies. What, if any, are its indispensable components, and which political values and normative aspirations should we associate with them? How does it relate to modern notions of freedom and equality, or notions of constitutionalism and the rule of law? If we are to understand its links to other major political and institutional ideals, do we need a full-scale normative political philosophy, or might instead a normatively less ambitious, but institutionally more fine-grained, theory suffice?

This chapter focuses on a number of key issues concerning time and the separation of powers. First, we recall major components of early modern or “classical” ideas of the separation of powers. An initially bipartite soon became a tripartite institutional model, with each (legislative, executive, and judicial institution) envisioned as performing a separate task or function. The separation of powers was also widely associated with a quest for institutional constraints (i.e., checks and balances) and limiting state power via its disaggregation and dispersal. Second, the chapter highlights a series of widely neglected temporal assumptions in traditional thinking about the separation of powers. Each component of its tripartite institutional structure was envisioned as resting on distinctive presuppositions about political time: the legislature was supposed to be deliberative and forward-looking, the executive fast-moving and contemporaneous, and the judiciary retrospective or backward-looking. Third, we offer a brief survey of notable

contemporary discussions of the separation of powers, pointing out that they still depend on older assumptions about political time. Both contemporary theorists who advance normatively ambitious accounts of the separation of powers, and those embracing normatively more modest accounts, continue to rely on traditional premises about its tripartite temporal structure. Fourth, the chapter suggests that intensified social acceleration poses major challenges to both classical and contemporary views of the separation of powers. In a political context in which the standard tripartite separation of powers seems increasingly disconnected from some emerging institutional realities, we face difficult questions about its temporal dynamics.

WHAT IS (OR WAS?) THE SEPARATION OF POWERS?

Although ideational forerunners within classical antiquity and medieval Western political thought can be identified, it was seventeenth-century English republican authors—and the great John Locke (1632–1704)—who probably first argued that legitimate government necessarily rests on a clear bipartite separation of powers between the legislature and the executive; he and other early theorists of the separation of powers typically failed to delineate the judiciary from other branches of government (Gwyn 1965). In Locke’s influential formulation, a numerous representative legislature had to be neatly delineated from a unitary (or one-person) executive if the making or promulgation of law, on the one hand, were to be successfully separated from its execution and adjudication, on the other hand. By undermining the strict “rule of law” that constituted free government’s cornerstone, their fusion opened the door to arbitrary government:

[I]t may be too great temptation to human frailty, apt to grasp at power, for the same persons who have the power of making laws to have also in their hands the power to execute them, whereby they may exempt themselves from obedience to the laws they making, and suit the law, both in its making and execution, to their own private advantage.

(Locke [1681] 1993, 335)

Without a clear division between those persons making the law and those enforcing and adjudicating them, government officials would likely manipulate the political process so as to undermine the possibility of impartial or general rules, rules that ideally are not to be “varied in particular cases” and have “no other end ultimately but the good of the people” (Locke [1681] 1993, 334–335). Without general rules, Locke famously argued, free government was unachievable. On this view, the separation of powers played a number of vital roles: some government tasks or functions, for example, were by nature

simply best left in the hands of legislators, and yet others with the executive. However, none of the separation of powers' accomplishments was perhaps more praiseworthy than its support for law-based government.

Despite some English—and sometimes politically radical—republican theoretical inspirations, the “name most associated with the doctrine of the separation of powers” remains Charles Louis de Secondet, Baron Montesquieu, the French aristocrat whose famous idealization of English political practice in his widely admired *Spirit of Laws* ([1748] 1949) delineated a free-standing judiciary from the executive and legislative branches, an innovation stemming from “heightened appreciation of the separate existence of the judicial power as distinct from the royal power which emerged in the early eighteenth-century” in France and elsewhere (Vile 1998, 83, 95). In spite of Montesquieu's conceptual and terminological ambiguities, and the fact that his ostensibly descriptive account of English practice had little to do with the real thing, he forged the outlines of a tripartite separation of powers that has haunted political thought and practice ever since. The US American constitutional framers, for example, relied heavily on Montesquieu when constructing the world's first durable experiment in large-scale modern republican government, as have countless others who, well into the present, have employed Montesquieu's tripartite separation as an institutional measuring rod. At the very least, we owe to Montesquieu's astonishing impact the still commonplace view of the separation of powers as essential for restraining—and thereby potentially taming and civilizing—the modern Leviathan's awesome political instruments: only when different types of government authority are neatly separated and placed in different hands, Montesquieu believed, could state power be effectively divvied up and a modicum of political and legal security preserved, a view the American constitutional architect James Madison (1751–1836), and many others in revolutionary America and elsewhere, subsequently embraced. The separation of powers, in short, has undergirded not only the idea of an impartial or general rule of law but also the idea of limited, or what we now often describe as liberal, government.

To be sure, the German legal theorist Christoph Möllers is right to push back against simplified, misleadingly nostalgic accounts of a unified “classical” separation of powers that flourished during a mythical liberal “golden age.” Such accounts have regularly served as political weapons, both for the political right and left, against whatever institutional developments those deploying them hope to discredit. As Möllers correctly observes, both the separation of powers' conceptual and its real-life institutional instantiations vary widely across political and national contexts, and also across time. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we find striking differences between and among its US American, English, French, and German renditions (Möllers 2013, 16–37).¹ Nowhere do we encounter a “pure” separation where legislative, executive, and judicial functions are unrelated: most proponents of the separation of powers have viewed such pure models as normatively unappealing and institutionally unrealistic. Even today, we encounter lively controversies between proponents of parliamentary or presidential (and semipresidential) government, debates often revolving around competing ideas of the separation of powers (Linz and Valenzuela 1994). The same can

be said about politically consequential rival views of the modern administrative and welfare states (Vermeule 2016). Like other core political ideals (e.g., representative democracy, the rule of law), the seemingly straightforward idea of a tripartite separation of powers has taken on different institutional forms and built on distinct—and sometimes rival—political and constitutional foundations.

Nonetheless, historical and conceptual complexities should not lead us to lose sight of the woods for the trees. It would be a mistake to obscure the separation of powers' central components. Although scholars have offered more extensive lists than what follows,² we can identify something approaching consensus about three of the separation of powers' main associations. For our purposes here, I neglect the difficult—and still controversial—matter of whether its three most common features require, or even meaningfully relate to, one other (Magill 2000; Waldron 2016).

First, and most fundamentally, early modern political thinkers envisioned a functional separation, according to which legislation, execution, and adjudication compose qualitatively different activities and tasks, each of which is indispensable to legitimate government. Stated in the simplest terms, legislation means creating or enacting laws, execution entails putting law into effect or actualizing it, while adjudication refers to the adjudication of disputes on the basis of preexisting laws. Because of their distinctive underlying logics, these three activities need to be conducted within separate institutional sites and by different officials, in part simply because they tap different modes of decision-making and, correspondingly, diverging skills, talents, practical orientations, and mindsets.³ General or impartial lawmaking demands of those exercising legislative “power” a different decision-making approach, for example, than what we expect from judges preoccupied with the resolution of “individual” or particular legal complaints or conflicts. As Locke and many others since him have argued, potential dangers result from any conflation or fusion of such functional tasks, for example, when legislators embrace a basically executive or adjudicative approach or orientation, jettisoning the quest for general, universalizable, impartial rules for individualized decisions crafted with a specific case, or even their own personal advantage, in mind. “The legislature, the judiciary, and the executive must each have its separate say before power impacts on the individual,” and if their separate activities are conflated, government will speak to us—and impact us—in confusing, potentially incoherent, and possibly harmful ways (Waldron 2016, 65). Without a functional separation of powers, the idea of the rule of law lacks essential institutional and procedural presuppositions (Neumann 1957, 36–38).

Though seemingly straightforward, this facet of the separation of powers still faces the analytically formidable task of disclosing what precisely is distinctive or special about government's three core activities or tasks. In its defense, the idea of a functional separation implies an attractive model of “articulated governance” in which the character and distinctiveness of government's main functions are properly heeded, with each function envisaged as fitting together into a coherent “common scheme of government that enables people to confront political power” in normatively and politically appealing ways (Waldron 2016, 70). For its many past and present defenders, we abandon it only at a high cost.

Second, the separation of powers has been commonly associated with checks and balances, where government is differentiated into distinct branches, while “giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others” (Publius [1788] 1999, 289–290). Building on premodern ideas of a “mixed constitution,” this feature of the separation of powers conceives of a tripartite system as realizing mutual institutional restraints, designed so as to thwart state power’s monopolization by any one political group or interest (in the language of the early US Federalists, any “faction”), and probably also to prevent any but the most consensual types of state action. Legitimate government, on this view, should allow each institution to veto its rivals, with the successful pursuit of common tasks ensuing only on the basis of a difficult to achieve coordination between and among rival institutional sites.

In its original US American version, checks and balances were conceived primarily as a possible restraint on the dangers of overweening popular legislative majorities. Not surprisingly, many writers have worried about this potentially anti-democratic connotation (Maus 1992; Levinson 2006).⁴ Such worries have not kept writers since Montesquieu from marrying the idea of a functional separation of powers to checks and balances, with the key claim being that absent the latter the former cannot thrive: without effective institutional checks and balances, it is unclear how a functional separation of powers might be maintained or preserved (Bellamy 2007, 202–203; Vile 1998, 102–106).

Third, the separation of powers has been viewed as essential to the disaggregation and dispersal of state power. On this account, the modern state needs to be internally restrained, and its many dangers checked by splitting up government and its personnel into distinct departments. Legitimate government “counsels against the concentration of too much political power in the hands of any one person, group, or agency” (Waldron 2016, 49). As already noted, this feature of the separation of powers appealed to Montesquieu, Madison, and other early modern thinkers, though they sometimes provided as a defense little more than the familiar cliché that divided power is inherently less dangerous than concentrated or centralized power.

Its modest conceptual roots notwithstanding, we might fruitfully reinterpret this third element as resting on sound worries about placing too much power in the hands of any single group of fallible (and potentially corrupt) officials, or as constituting a symbolic break with obsolescent, monarchical conceptions of undivided, “absolute” sovereignty (Arendt 1963, 150–154), or even as a sensible call to provide citizens with multiple options for institutional recourse when frustrated with their government and its unavoidable failings (Waldron 2016, 50). Here as well, there are probably good normative grounds for holding onto it.

AN INGENIOUS TEMPORAL CLOCKWORK

Although usually ignored, classical ideas about the separation of powers presuppose a decisive temporal subtext (Scheuerman 2004, 26–70). Indeed, without proper attention

to their implicit assumptions about political time, it is impossible to make sense of them. Each of its three institutional components was viewed as possessing a distinct or separate temporal orientation and a closely related temporal velocity. Legislation was supposed to be prospective or future-oriented, and thus appropriately deliberative or unhurried. The executive's temporal orientation, in contrast, was contemporaneous or present-minded; it was expected to act in a correspondingly energetic or rapid-fire fashion. Finally, the judiciary was basically retrospective or backwards-looking, its optimal velocity viewed as situated uneasily between the slow-moving legislature and fast-moving executive. These distinct institutional temporalities were also conceived as complementing each another, so that the separation of powers' underlying "clockwork" would tick—or so many early modern theorists hoped—in a complex, yet properly tuned, fashion.

Legislation was widely viewed as prospective or future-oriented, with those pursuing it tasked with trying to predict or "foresee, and so by laws provide for, all accidents and necessities that may concern the public" (Locke [1681] 1993, 344). For Locke and others, prospective legislative statutes were supposed to anticipate future political "accidents" and regulate them in an impartial or general fashion, so as to provide state officials with clear guidelines about how best to act. Clear, general rules represented a keystone for the rule of law's impartiality and law's overall constancy: legislators faced not only the arduous task of predicting complex future political exigencies, but also of generating well-crafted rules that ideally would remain stable for a lengthy period of time. Tellingly, Locke proposed that ordinary legislative rules become "null and void" only after one hundred years (Locke [1681] 1993, 226).

Requiring of legislators that they coordinate future activities and demanding of them significant predictive capacities, this facet of the separation of powers was premised on an interpretation of the future as temporally open-ended. Legislators were outfitted with authority to enact novel laws since there was no principled reason to assume that the future necessarily reproduced the past. Modern notions of statutory legislation as innovative and future-oriented thus break cleanly with traditionalistic, backwards-looking views of law (e.g., the common law) and government as resting on an essentially static "good old law" (Luhmann 1972, 190–226, 294–353).

Not surprisingly, in early modern political thought lawmaking was necessarily a slow-moving, suitably unhurried, temporal activity.⁵ If the future were to be successfully regulated in a general or impartial manner, after all, it was crucial that representative institutions be relatively large or numerous to guarantee that their deliberations encompassed a broad diversity of interests and voices. The awesome task of coordinating and predicting the future cried out for a daunting arsenal of cognitive and deliberative tools, along with wide-ranging, relatively unchecked debate and contestation. Even those writers otherwise skeptical of large, elected, popular legislatures described the relatively slow-moving, deliberative character of legislatures as an institutional virtue: Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804) wrote in *Federalist 70* that unavoidable "differences of opinion" and the "jarring of parties" meant that in the legislature "promptitude of decision is oftener an evil than a benefit" (Publius [1788] 1999, 394). If legislators were to

accomplish their apportioned tasks properly, Hamilton intuited, they could only be expected to do so in a measured, unhurried fashion.

For precisely this reason, Hamilton and others envisioned the executive as necessarily following a different, yet ultimately complementary, temporal logic. Since some threats to law and public order seemed unavoidable, effective government required an “energetic” or temporally fast-moving executive, as Montesquieu tellingly put it, capable of being “employed in momentary operations” to enforce law and speedily counter challenges to its integrity ([1748] 1949, 158). General legislation’s ongoing actualization demanded a separate institution whose temporal orientation was present-oriented or contemporaneous, in part because of the necessity of bracing legislation with immediate or ongoing enforcement, but also in part due to prospective lawmaking’s necessary limitations. For Locke, a highly discretionary “prerogative” power should be placed in the executive’s hands “to provide for the public good, in such cases, which depending on unforeseen and uncertain circumstances, certain and unalterable laws could not safely direct” ([1681] 1993, 343). Since even the most deliberate, slow-moving legislatures were by nature poorly suited to the rapid-fire dictates of legal enforcement and the management of unexpected crises, a contemporaneous or present-minded executive, institutionally crafted to act with “dispatch” or speed, was a political necessity. Especially in the context of unpredictable foreign affairs subject to frequent change, the executive’s present-minded temporal orientation, and closely related capacity to act rapidly, was at a premium. How better to guarantee law’s effective enforcement, and that its necessary limitations be overcome, than by making sure that “final say” rests in the hands of a unitary executive able to respond expeditiously?

In classical models of the separation of powers, the judiciary occupied a somewhat precarious status, with writers prior to Montesquieu usually denying it equal status vis-à-vis the legislature and executive. Perhaps this explains some of the ambiguities plaguing their temporal reflections about the courts. At any rate, the judiciary was usually viewed as fundamentally retrospective or past-oriented, the basic idea being that judicial actors should follow standing (or past rules or precedents), focused exclusively on determining whether some more recent (but also past) individual action matched them. Among Enlightenment-era political writers, there was intense disdain for judicial “discretion,” let alone anything approaching judicial lawmaking. Ideally, judges engaged exclusively in historical, or past-oriented, excavations whose strict borders were preset by clearly formulated, publicly declared, prestanding legal materials. Unlike prospective, general legislation, and the freewheeling deliberation and contestation by large assemblies it called for, the judiciary consisted of a smaller corps of legal experts, experts tasked not only with acquiring a deep knowledge of the law but of digging systematically into the (recent) past in order to determine matters of guilt or innocence. Correspondingly, an independent judiciary required time-consuming procedures and formalities, so that it might best serve “the end that the people may grow calm and give their judgment coolly” (Montesquieu [1748] 1949, 77). Alongside praise for the temporal virtues of relatively deliberative, unhurried judicial action, however, we also encounter admiration for judicial “promptness”: drawn-out judicial proceedings, where those

found guilty are subject to the whims of official dilly-dallying, are envisaged as incongruent with a just system of criminal punishment (Beccaria [1764] 1986, 36–37).

Despite such ambiguities, we can still admire the many ways in which the early modern separation of powers aimed to institutionalize a multisided yet cogent political clockwork. Rather ingeniously, it acknowledged the virtues of separate prospective, contemporaneous, and retrospective temporal orientations: its tripartite institutional structure provided a secure institutional home for each, in part because each mode of temporality was viewed as indispensable to government. Similarly, the classical approach recognized the virtues of having both “slow” and “fast” institutions: some facets of governance (i.e., complex, forward-looking legislation) required the former, while others (i.e., constantly changing, unpredictable exigencies, or dire crises) called on the former. Any political order that lacked recourse to competing temporalities, by implication, was probably inadequate. Temporality was always essential to the separation of powers because its different (legislative, executive, and judicial) functions required different temporal orientations and velocities.

The separation of powers’ contribution to institutional dispersal not only checked the accumulation of excessive political power but also the undesirable prospect of political hegemony by a single temporality. In short, it guaranteed that a plurality of temporalities complemented one another. In contrast, states lacking a proper separation of powers risked privileging one temporality (most likely, the executive’s) over others, or perhaps conflating or collapsing them in such a way that none could properly function. An executive who engaged in prospective lawmaking, for example, would tend to produce rushed, poorly considered laws, unlikely to prove socially relevant for any but a short period of time, and lacking in the requisite impartiality. The problem, in the simplest terms, was that the executive’s built-in institutional temporality was poorly suited to lawmaking, just as the legislature and judiciary were badly adapted to the executive’s temporally pressing endeavors. We might also plausibly interpret the idea of checks and balances as inferring that legitimate government action should provide competing temporal horizons and velocities—and their institutional embodiments—with possibilities to check those actions that might not pass their own distinctive temporal “tests.” State action should only proceed, on this interpretation, when representatives of otherwise competing institutional temporalities could successfully hammer out broad agreement. If they failed to do so, the proposal at hand perhaps embodied a narrow or one-sided temporal perspective that did not properly heed legitimate government’s temporally multisided contours.

NEW THEORIES, SAME CLOCKWORK

The separation of powers remains, as noted earlier, an object of an impressive array of debates between and among lawyers, philosophers, political scientists, and others. Here I limit myself to making two points about the ongoing discussion, much of which has

been generated by recent developments that challenge traditional institutional models, for example, the dramatic expansion of the modern administrative state, according to some commentators a “fourth” branch of government contrary to Montesquieu’s tripartite account (Ackerman 2000, 2010; Carolan 2009; Neumann 1957, 142), or new types of postnational “governance” that do not easily correspond to conventional ideas about separate legislative, executive, and judicial powers (Curtin 2009; Möllers 2013, 150–226).

First, much of the debate, particularly among its more theoretical-minded participants, ultimately revolves around a methodological preference for either a “thick” (that is, ambitious, robust) normative—or instead a normatively more modest, “thin,” institutionally centered—theory of separated powers. We can usefully categorize recent scholarly contributions as falling into one of these two methodological camps. Second, despite this major methodological disagreement, the “classical” temporal clockwork still seems to tick, even among writers who tend to reject traditional conceptions of the separation of powers: contemporary writers regularly reproduce familiar ideas about political time. Some evidence also suggests that the original temporal imaginary shapes popular or mass thinking about political institutions—for example, in the aftermath of terrorist attacks or economic crises, when calls for “rapid” executive responses often become ubiquitous.⁶

Within the first (“thick”) methodological camp, authors embed their interpretations of the separation of powers in relatively detailed normative reconstructions of core liberal and democratic ideals. The philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas, for example, builds on a rich normative analysis of what he dubs the “equiprimordiality” of private and public autonomy, or human rights and popular sovereignty, as a starting point for his communicative-theoretical reconstruction (Habermas 1996, 84–103, 186–193). In a related vein, Möllers starts with an interpretation of democratic legitimacy as synthesizing self-determination with individual liberties (Möllers 2013, 4–5). Such analyses cannot be accused of mechanically deducing institutional models from unrealistic “ideal” theory, despite what contemporary representatives of contemporary political realism suggest: the presently fashionable parlance of “ideal” versus “real” theory distorts the theoretical complexities at hand.⁷ Nonetheless, those pursuing a thick approach do in fact presume that only a sound analysis of modern liberal democracy’s core normative aspirations can help us make sense of the separation of powers.

In Habermas’s revisionist account, the conventional idea of a tripartite separation of powers is restated in terms of a fundamental differentiation between alternative modes of communication. Legislation, execution (and administration), and adjudication are viewed as resting on separate yet complementary ways of making arguments and justifying reasons. From this “argumentation-theoretical perspective, the division of powers and responsibilities among authorities that respectively make, apply, and implement laws follow from the distribution of the possibilities for access to different sorts of reasons and to the corresponding forms of communication that determine how these reasons are dealt with” (Habermas 1996, 192). In this model, the legislature should enjoy access to the widest range of arguments and justifications, whereas the judiciary and executive are properly more constrained in their argumentative and justificatory contours.

More recently, the Canadian political scientist Maxwell A. Cameron has built on Habermas by describing the separation of powers as an imposing communicative (and linguistic) network that allows for the resolution of messy collective action problems, with its tripartite structure capturing different types of speech acts: legislative power deals with matters of general interest that culminate in written texts (i.e., codified legislation); the executive “exercises coercive power in conformity with the texts produced,” while the judiciary “issues statements concerning whether actions” correspond to legal rules (Cameron 2013, 33).

For our purposes, what matters is that these and other “thick” theories reproduce conventional ideas about temporality, even when seemingly unaware of their overall contours and far-reaching implications. For example, Möllers characterizes the legislature as generating “general, future-oriented legal decisions,” while the judiciary is characterized as adjudicating “individualized cases on external initiative, retrospectively” (Möllers 2013, 84–89). The executive then fills the temporal gaps between the legislature and judiciary, satisfying “the demand for law of an intermediary scope and temporal orientation,” concentrating on the ongoing or “present realization of law” (Möllers 2013, 97–98). Cameron reiterates many early modern ideas the separation of powers and political time: since the executive deals with urgent matters and potential crises, it should be capable of energetic, rapid-fire institutional responses, whereas the numerous persons of the legislature exercise public reason in a deliberative, and thus less temporally rapid-fire, fashion (Cameron 2013, 34–42).

Within the “thin” camp of writers advancing what they view as a more fruitful, down-to-earth, institutionally centered approach to separated powers, we also find familiar temporal premises and many traditional ideas about institutional temporality. Significantly, the main claim motivating such thin theories is not that normative theory is *per se* irrelevant, but instead that modern pluralistic societies rest on deep disagreements about matters of morality, justice, and even rights (Waldron, 2016, 8; also Barber 2001). Consequently, any institutional theory of the separation of powers has to “constitute more than the mere organizational instantiation of a society’s substantive normative views” (Carolan 2009, 8). Since far-reaching disagreement about basic normative questions is irrepressible, any theory of the separation of powers presuming some consensus about them is likely to prove flawed. Such thin theories, not surprisingly, come in many shapes and sizes, with some proponents aiming to resuscitate the traditional tripartite separation of powers (Bellamy 2007; Waldron 2016), others seeking its modification in relatively far-reaching ways (Carolan 2009), while yet others seem to abandon many of its core facets altogether (Posner and Vermeule 2010; Vermeule 2016).

Waldron describes large, diverse representative legislatures as necessarily requiring “time and careful deliberation,” following Hamilton and other classical thinkers in warning of the perils of reckless or hasty lawmaking, in stark contrast to the “agility and decisiveness” of executive action (Waldron 2016, 68, 141, 155). While rejecting Waldron’s attempt to reformulate the idea of a functional separation of powers, the jurists Eric Posner and Adrian Vermeule, in their affirmative analysis of the rise of executive-dominated government within the United States, still rely on the familiar temporal

and institutional contrast between slow, deliberative legislatures and expeditious, fast-moving executives. Though they acknowledge that the modern executive (and administrative state) represents a large, unwieldy institutional creature, its hierarchical structure allegedly guarantees that executives can “act with much greater unity, force, and dispatch” than popular legislatures, whose large numbers, deliberative orientation, “elaborate procedures, and internal structures” necessarily render them temporally inefficient (Posner and Vermeule 2010, 27, 43; Vermeule 2016, 69–73). The judiciary remains a reactive, temporally retrospective institution poorly suited to taking the political initiative; it tends to lag behind the executive, whose capacity for taking the first, decisive move in every political game means that it can redefine the terms of that game even before other institutions have had a chance to act. Within the United States, and probably in other liberal democracies elsewhere, “the executive—alone of national institutions—has the capacity to take action in the real world, outside the law books, and that action changes the status quo facing other institutions” (Posner and Vermeule 2010, 11). Even in twenty-first-century debates about the separation of powers, the early modern notion of an executive able to act with “dispatch” continues to rear its head, even among authors who appeal to recent social-scientific innovations.

SEPARATION OF POWERS AND SOCIAL ACCELERATION

The process of social acceleration, as diagnosed by the social theorist Hartmut Rosa (2013), raises difficult questions for the temporal separation of powers presupposed by classical as well as contemporary writers. Social acceleration seems to privilege high-speed institutions best able to adjust to contemporary temporal pressures, disabling or disfiguring other institutions unable to keep up with the dictates of a high-speed social environment. Social acceleration throws a wrench into the neat clockwork of the temporal separation of powers. Unfortunately, it remains unclear how we might best recalibrate that clock in accordance with the dictates of present-day high-speed society.

Contemporary social experiences of speed can be usefully placed under three rubrics. First, we find empirical evidence for intense technological acceleration, according to which key technical processes (in communication, transportation, and production) take place at ever faster paces than in previous periods. Second, the pace of significant social change or innovation evinces far-reaching acceleration as well, with key shifts in economic production and organization, for example, taking place at a breakneck rate. Third, systematic empirical testimony points to a heightened tempo within everyday life, as we observe an objectively measurable intensification of experiences and activities (Rosa 2013). Whatever social acceleration’s fundamental structural sources, a sizable body of social scientific evidence supports the view that ours is increasingly a

high-speed society whose pace and velocity leaves its historical predecessors in the dust (Rosa and Scheuerman 2009; Scheuerman 2004, 1–25).

Social acceleration seems destined to pave the way for consequential institutional shifts. Given its temporal premises, we can begin to reconstruct how the separation of powers will likely undergo institutional transformations unforeseen by most proponents, many of whom have envisioned representative legislatures as its decision-making keystone. Revealingly, one of acceleration's most striking features is the proliferation of novel social experiences and trends (new technologies, for example, or abrupt shifts in economic or military affairs) which not only transpire at a heightened pace but do so suddenly and unexpectedly. With social acceleration, the pace of technological innovation tends to increase dramatically, economic production is constantly reorganized, and new forms of social interaction multiply. Social acceleration dramatically heightens the unpredictability of social and economic affairs: a high-speed society makes the already difficult task of prospective lawmaking even more arduous, as the intensified rate of social change means that even well-crafted legislative statutes may soon become obsolescent. Acceleration seems likely to reduce—and perhaps disable—the predictive capacities of even the most qualified legislators. As the intensified pace of change conflicts with the necessarily unhurried traits of lawmaking, a basic temporal misfit is likely to emerge, with legislators overwhelmed by the increasingly awesome challenges at hand. The prospect of successful prospective lawmaking becomes an ever more arduous uphill battle, and one that many legislatures will likely lose.⁸

The “energetic” executive, widely pictured by separation of powers theory as best suited to tackling unforeseen “emergencies,” is likely to be the first institutional site to which other players in the political game then turn. Standard preconceptions about the executive as an “energetic” institutional player appear to undergird its claim to be best able to tackle the constant whirl and change that now characterize social and economic affairs. Legislators may opt to delegate broad swaths of decision-making authority to the executive and administrative state. In a social context in which speed and temporal efficiency are at a premium, ordinary citizens are likely to become impatient with the temporally sluggish contours of time-consuming parliamentary debate and exchange. The executive's promise to act “energetically” in the face of deeply rooted problems, let alone serious crises, will seem more attractive in high-speed societies than those operating according to more leisurely temporalities.⁹ In the traditional view, as described previously, a central justification for executive power was of course precisely the need to grapple with sudden “accidents” prospective lawmakers failed to anticipate. Such “accidents” become commonplace in a high-speed society.

The judiciary's retrospective time orientation and relatively slow-going, deliberative character also seems likely to leave it lagging badly behind the dictates of high-speed society. How then might courts adapt to novel temporal dictates? Writing in 1930, the legal theorist Jerome Frank already perceptively suggested how courts might undergo the requisite institutional shifts. Anticipating core traits of social acceleration, Frank observed,

[n]ew instruments of production, new modes of travel and of dwelling, new credit and . . . ownership devices, new concentrations of capital . . . all of these factors of

innovation make vain the hope that definitive legal rules can be drafted that will forever after solve all problems. When human relationships are transforming daily, legal relationships cannot be expressed in enduring legal form. The constant development of unprecedented problems requires a legal system capable of fluidity and pliancy. Our society would be straight-jacketed were not the courts . . . constantly overhauling the law and adapting it to the realities of ever-changing social, industrial, and political conditions.

(Frank [1930] 1963, 6–7)

Courts would need to shed their backward-looking temporality and instead contribute to the forward-looking “overhaul” of the law. If they were to succeed in doing so, however, it would be unrealistic to limit their activities to the strict enforcement of clearly formulated general rules. Law itself would need to leave more room for societal “fluidity” than strictly formulated, clear, general rules typically permit. In the process, judges and courts would take on new roles and tasks for which traditional mods of formalistic legal thinking left them poorly prepared.

In sum, social acceleration seems destined to generate severe strains for the normatively appealing idea of the separation of powers as resting on a plurality of temporal orientations and velocities. Early modern theorists hoped, as we have noted, to prevent the hegemony of not just one institutional site but also any single temporality. Yet social acceleration is likely to undermine that project: if political institutions are going to prove relevant in a high-speed social context, they will need to synchronize their temporalities accordingly. The executive, with its capacity to undertake rapid, fast-moving policy reactions, would seem most likely to prove victorious in any ensuing institutional struggle. In a high-speed social context, legislative-driven government tends to be jettisoned for executive-dominated government, while the institutional “balance” between and among government’s three branches seems increasingly imbalanced in the executive’s favor.

Thus far I have tentatively speculated about social acceleration’s likely impact on the separation of powers and its temporal presuppositions. In fact, a growing body of literature within law, political science, and sociology can be provisionally interpreted as buttressing at least some of these predictions about acceleration’s likely institutional consequences.¹⁰ To be sure, such empirical claims raise a host of complicated questions, only some of which have been systematically examined.¹¹ Still, the preliminary evidence seems clear enough. Slow-going legislatures indeed tend to get left at the wayside, in part because they seem poorly attuned to a policy environment that requires rapid-fire responses to complex, constantly changing social conditions. Because of present temporal necessities, legislatures delegate substantial discretionary decision-making to the executive and administrative state, both of which seem to face only a modest range of legal and institutional checks, as has been partly demonstrated—with many normatively disturbing implications—for the US case (Posner and Vermeule 2010).¹² According to one recent analysis of the emergence of executive-dominated government in the United States, “the executive [repeatedly] proved capable of acting with dispatch and power,

while Congress fretted, fumed, and delegated” (Posner and Vermeule 2010, 44). In the United States, courts often seem to have given up trying to exercise meaningful judicial oversight over the administrative state (Vermeule 2016). Things look even messier “beyond the nation-state,” in the context of postnational governance, where emerging decision-making mechanisms tend to clash with conventional notions of the separation of powers. Temporal pressures, and especially calls for high-speed policy responses in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, have left national parliaments at the wayside, with new and oftentimes poorly defined authority accruing to unelected, inadequately accountable postnational institutions (Goetz 2014; White 2015). Even if such postnational emergency actors lack core traits of modern executive power, they exploit widespread calls for speedy policy responses and occasionally take on some executive functions (Scheuerman 2017).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the idea of the separation of power and the appealing temporal clockwork on which it rested. Unfortunately, social acceleration risks destroying that clockwork’s intricate operations. Although scholars have begun to explore social acceleration’s challenges to the separation of powers, they have had little to say about how we might repair or update the temporal separation of powers. Both classical and contemporary authors viewed that temporality as essential to the separation of powers and any legitimate system of government constructed on it. If we are to preserve a sufficiently desirable version of the separation of powers, we probably need to figure out how to fix its temporal clockwork.

A first step would be to take a closer and more critical look at recent proposals to revise traditional views of the separation of powers, including some briefly discussed previously, with a temporal lens in mind. Posner and Vermeule, for example, advocate discarding the tripartite “Madisonian” separation of powers, seeing it as necessarily out of sync with an administrative state they conceive as basically executive-dominated. We should embrace executive-dominated government, focusing on cultivating political — but not the usual legal-institutional — restraints on it (Posner and Vermeule 2010). Like many others, and despite some important caveats, they ultimately attribute a degree of temporal efficiency to the executive that probably still obscures key empirical and temporal realities. Today the executive is not the one-person “unitary” institutional player described in classical theories: the US federal executive, for example, has an estimated 600,000 employees. A messy, multiheaded, and often temporally sluggish institutional creature, the modern executive does not possess self-evident temporal advantages vis-à-vis legislatures or courts, a point that raises problems for those who seek to replace traditional versions of liberal democracy with some new executive-centered alternative. Before we uncritically or inadvertently celebrate the executive’s capacity for speed, we need more hard-headed empirical studies about its real-life temporality.

The still commonplace association of executive power with speed and dispatch seems at least partly ideological given the complexities of modern government. As we seek to update the separation of powers' original clockwork, we should avoid succumbing to potentially dangerous illusions about existing institutions and their real-life temporal dynamics.

NOTES

1. On the German version, see Fenske (1975).
2. See, for example, the substantially longer list provided by Carolan (2009, 27–28).
3. We do not typically want our judges to reason or act like prime ministers or presidents, for example, or presidents and prime ministers to proceed in the “legalistic” (and not just legal) fashion of a judge or lawyer.
4. Other authors, however, have tried to reconstruct the idea of checks and balances according to republican notions of self-governance (Bellamy 2007; Carolan 2009).
5. Moreover, constitutional mechanisms were designed so as to make sure that legislative temporality was appropriately paced. In an insightful study, Greg Weiner (2012) describes the Madisonian version of the separation of powers by means of the illuminating metaphor of a “metronome,” a musical device employed to guarantee precise timing and rhythm.
6. For example, in the context of the 2008 global financial crisis. On the executive-led, and legally rather suspect, US American response, see Wallach (2015).
7. Habermas, for example, does not defend a one-sided “ideal” or normative theory, as any fair-minded reading of the opening chapters of *Between Facts and Norms* corroborates. As he systematically lays out there, his theory of democracy and the rule of law should be viewed as mediating between “facts and norms” (1996, 1–41).
8. The proliferation of temporary law and “sunset clauses” seems to be one result (Ranchordas 2014).
9. An element of our high-speed society, I should add, that seems disturbingly pertinent to the increasing popularity of authoritarian populisms on both the left and right.
10. See Scheuerman (2004) and also Hassan (2009).
11. This handbook, as well as a growing body of empirical literature both in sociology and political science devoted to temporality as an object of serious social-scientific research, represents part of the effort to fill the gap. The journal *Time and Society* has also served as a useful site for research on social acceleration and its broader implications, including those of some relevance to political scientists.
12. For a critical response, however, see Mortenson (2014). To their credit, Posner and Vermeule have identified some disturbing institutional offshoots of social acceleration within the US political context. However, they overstate their empirical case and understate its normative dangers. They celebrate social acceleration's tendency to undermine the separation of powers, as conventionally conceived, rather than thinking constructively enough about how to counter it.

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CHAPTER 23

THE ORIGINS OF TEMPORAL LEGITIMACY

Normative Political Theory and Time

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HISTORICAL analyses of the relations between political theory and time often hinge on two claims. The first is that political theorists have until recently put less emphasis on the future than the past when debating the grounds that legitimate political authority and action. In such a framework, political theory is informed by a philosophy of history. The second is that the history of political theory draws a fundamental distinction between theories that invoke time to legitimate political structures and theories that reject temporal considerations in favor of timeless principles (Lane, 2000).

This chapter disputes these two claims by developing the assumption that practices of legitimization play a central role in normative political theory and that competing languages of legitimacy harbor different and interrelated conceptions of temporality. In relation to the first claim, a survey of time conceptions in the history of political philosophy shows that temporality, involving double regard for the past and the future, is a necessary feature of any normative political theory. As for the second claim, since even tenseless principles of legitimacy often depend on temporally related forms of consent to be binding, considerations about time seem inescapable in normative political theory. Moreover, a critical distinction between the universal and the particular is in order. Whereas strong temporal conceptions of political legitimacy establish that time is an essential aspect of the normative criteria in light of which claims to authority are to be considered legitimate, the remaining conceptions of legitimacy require time above all with regard to the particularity of political judgment.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first opposes the commonplace view that the Greco-Roman perception of political time was cyclical, whereas the Judeo-Christian perception was linear. Instead, political theory in ancient and medieval worldviews shows traces of complex conceptions of multitemporality. The second focuses on the modern period and maintains that the link between consent

and legitimacy has significant consequences for political time. The mainstream view that modern secular time involves a break with the past and an excessive focus on the present is also rejected and replaced with a multitemporal reinterpretation of consent theories. The third section concentrates on contemporary political theory and dismisses the view that liberal-egalitarians understand legitimacy only in tenseless terms, whereas nonliberal egalitarians focus mainly on the past. Instead, it provides an overview of several theories to show that they require temporality and regard to both the future and the past. In the end, it should be clear that time plays an essential political role in all theories of political legitimacy, albeit at different levels.

THEORIZING POLITICAL TIME IN THE PREMODERN WORLD

A commonplace view in the philosophy of history claims that linear time was established in Europe only with Judeo-Christian notions of continuity. Insofar as duration was purposive, a time-for-the-sake-of-something (God, salvation, the promised land), linearity connected an original point A (the Creation) to an ultimate point B (Judgment Day) (Cullmann, 1950, 51–60; Le Goff, 1960; Greenhouse, 1989). This nonsecular perception supposedly contrasted with the cosmological framework with which the ancient Greeks and Romans perceived the connection between events that have already occurred and events still to occur, in a cyclical manner (Momigliano, 1966).

Two examples typically illustrate this belief in the Greco-Roman tendency to privilege cyclical time. The first is an emphasis on the usefulness of historiography for stabilizing a collective identity across time. Thucydides's justification for writing *The Peloponnesian War* expresses this cross-temporal task: "[my work] will have served its purpose well enough if it is judged useful by those who want to have a clear view of what happened in the past and what—the human condition being what it is—can be expected to happen again some time in the future in similar or much the same ways" (Thucydides, 2013: 1.22.4). Written history was not merely a way to preserve a recorded memory of the past; it also constituted proof of common cultural roots and served as an educational tool for anticipating a future that was expected to be a repetition of the past (Edmunds, 1975, 1491–1455).

The second example is the recurrent endorsement, in antiquity, of the view that political constitutions succeed according to cyclical patterns. Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero voiced this endorsement, which achieved its most prominent articulation with Polybius's theory of *anacyclosis*, according to which communities change constitutions by following a degenerative cycle (Polybius, 2010, VI). The only way to prevent degeneration and corruption would be to halt the cyclical patterns of time, for instance by establishing principles that were binding on rulers and by drawing up what would be the normative structure of a well-ordered city if men acted according to reason. Historians

of political thought were led then to the belief that, in the premodern worldviews, “only the universal, the unchanging and consequently the timeless, was truly rational,” which “raised in an acute form the problem, which could become crucial, of the intelligibility of the particular, the local, the transitory—and consequently of time considered as the dimension of transitory being” (Pocock, 1989, 81). In this way, the contingencies and the susceptibility to change that are intrinsic to politics were referred inevitably as belonging to the field of the unintelligible and the irrational.

However, the prevalent association of the Greco-Roman worldview with cyclical time is problematic because it neglects important features that reveal different perceptions of time. One such feature was the importance of family as a civil and religious institution in which the father assumed the roles of magistrate and priest. The father’s authority derived from the (domestically limited) divine-like quality of his ancestors and, by embodying them, he was himself a prospective god (Siedentop, 2014, 9–16). The household was a form of continuity. Even if individuals and communities seemed subject to cycles of history, families prevailed linearly. Bernini’s statue of Aeneas, Anchises, and Ascanius fleeing Troy, as described in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, depicts this linearity. It shows Aeneas carrying his father, Anchises, who in turn holds the images of the household gods, while the young Ascanius carries the household fire. A temporal line crosses this image, starting from up high, with the household gods, passing through Anchises, Aeneas, and Ascanius, and ending down below, in the household fire—from past to present to future.

Even beyond the domestic realm, the capacity to preserve continuity was what justified privileging certain political regimes over others. Debates about the best form of government were often inquiries not into sheer numbers (rule by the many, the few, or one) but into the best means for deciding about the future without losing some connection to the past. The optimal regime was the best fit to counter the cycles of history. Herodotus’s description of the Persians’ discussion of the best political regime illustrates such a preoccupation with linearity. Otanes argues for democracy and is countered by Megabyzus’s claim that the *demos* is epistemically unfit to look into the future and should therefore be replaced with oligarchy. The debate is settled by Darius’s defense of monarchy, based on the king’s capacity to “judge in keeping with his character” and to “refrain from changing ancient laws” (Herodotus 2003, 3.82). Monarchy is preferable because the king draws his authority from custom and is better equipped to face the future (Allen 2011, 86).

Another relevant Greco-Roman feature was the “critical dualism” (Popper, 1994, 58) of the classical opposition between convention (*nomos*) and nature (*physis*)—a distinction, made explicit especially by the Sophists, between human-made laws, based on decisions, and the natural regularities that are beyond human powers (Heinimann, 1945; Hobbs, 1998). The “nature versus convention” debate displayed a contrast between temporalities: the cyclical regularities of nature were objects of contemplation immune to human intervention, whereas conventions depended on situated (in space and time) human action. The combination of the two elements, the concepts of *physis* and *nomos*, into one complex concept, that of natural law, which dominated philosophical

debates for several centuries (Burns, 2011, 140–170), also involved a combination of temporalities. *Physis* was cosmological, and the unalterable character of the cycles by which it unfolded was eternal. Even when natural, however, *nomoi* were justifiable only when actualized in temporality, in general rules or particular decisions affecting people's lives, in view of a future that could be changed by human intervention.

Political time in the Greco-Roman worldview was then a combination of eternity, cyclical and linear time. Athenian democracy, in the period between approximately 500 and 300 BCE, is representative of such different temporal dimensions of legitimacy and practice. The two principles of democracy, liberty (*eleutheria*) and equality (*isonomia*), were the rational and *atemporal* grounds of the rules and procedures distinctive of this form of constitution. Their application, in turn, required institutions that operated in specific timeframes: the appointment of offices by lot; the inability to hold the same office twice or often; brief tenure of office; payment for political services rendered by citizens. Since citizens were equally free with regard to participation in public affairs, offices and magistracies were necessarily ephemeral so as to offer opportunities to all. The rhythm of succession was therefore *cyclical*, subject to the civic Athenian calendar (Meritt, 1961; Mikalson, 1975), and no one individual or clan had the privilege of a continuous enhancement of power—conventional cyclical time was the expression of a temporal check on power. Still, when in office, whether in the Assembly or the courts, citizens embodied two levels of authority: the memory of the polis's founders embedded in the laws, and the day-to-day deliberations of the *demos* (Ober, 1989; Cohen, 1995; Allen, 2003). The contrast between the generality of the laws and the particularity of decisions, between *nomos* and *kairos*, was also a difference between temporal dimensions. The notion of *kairos*, the “fitting moment” for a word in rhetorical exercises or the “appropriate time” for deciding a policy or issuing a judgment, depended on the here and now, typically determined by the use of water clocks in public courts and assemblies (Allen 1996) and extended toward the future. From the viewpoint of *kairos*, persuasion and decision-making face forward, regardless of cyclical timeframes, in a *linear* manner—democratic decision-making involves forethought (*pronoia*) (Ober, 1998, 74–104; Farenga, 2006, 317–339) and domination over time (Gudelis, 2020). Athenian democracy was thus a legitimate form of rule only when its underlying principles were implemented in a variety of temporalities.

Plato's political philosophy also reproduces multiples temporalities. In the *Republic*, true knowledge is limited to the intelligible world of timeless and imperishable entities (“Forms”), in contrast to the sensible world of particulars, which are contingent and perishable. The founding of a just city depends on how closely the sensible world of particulars can mirror the atemporal form of collective organization—the just city requires acting in time in light of principles outside of time. Such acting in time occurs within the cycles of history (a view repeated by Plato in the *Laws* 677a), albeit with an emphasis on corruption and decay rather than renewal. The aspiration to establish a just city relies on a “noble lie” and depends on the epistemic ability to rule from knowledge of timeless universals, which is why only philosophers should be kings. Philosophers, however, find it challenging to master the demands of the changing moment and to

react by judging particulars within the temporal confines of *kairos* (*Rep* 546d). The degeneration of the city comes about via the contrast between timelessness and the temporality of *kairos*. Three modalities of political time emerge here: power by time, in the transition from timeless standards to temporal rule (Popitz, 2017, 85); power over time (Aveni, 2002; Whitrow, 1988), in the philosopher king's ability to set new conventions and make decisions for the future; and power in time, in the precariousness of the relationship between temporal knowledge and (re)acting on particulars. Plato's conception of political time in the *Republic* involves all three modalities in an interrelated and symbiotic fashion hardly unencumbered by internal contradictions.

In the *Statesman*, Plato refined his complex view of political time by emphasizing that the proper exercise of government depends on some measure of control over the temporal flux (Lane, 1998), perhaps as a consequence of his search for "a science of deliberative measurement" (Nussbaum, 2001, 107) mentioned in the *Protagoras*. Aristotle developed this idea by distinguishing between theoretical and practical knowledge. The latter, which deals with judgments in time, aims at correction, even though it is not theoretically deducible. The particulars of sound political judgment, as well as the exercise of prudence in political deliberation, unfold in time and require accumulated experience throughout time. *Pronoia* requires a linear temporal dimension insofar as the past offers tools for dealing with the affairs of the future, as evinced by speeches in decision-making procedures (Aristotle, 1991, 1418a-21-29). Once more, political time harmonizes the cycles of history with a need for continuity in public affairs.

The difference between the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian conceptions of political time is not so much a difference between cyclical and linear directions of duration as it is a difference between cosmocentric and theocentric worldviews. Whereas political time for the ancient Greeks and Romans was a complex structure of temporalities operating against the background of a perfectly harmonized cosmos that could be regarded as the ultimate standard of justice and legitimacy, medieval authors traced the origins of temporal political powers to God's eternal providence, absent of time and change (Pocock, 1989, 233–272). In the Middle Ages, political authority derived directly from God, in a transition from timelessness to temporality. But political authority, once acquired, continued to unfold in different timeframes that reinforced legitimacy: a monarch could be crowned in a once-and-for-all fashion by religious authorities, but he still demanded that his subjects commit explicitly to his rule via periodically renewed oaths of allegiance (Siedentop, 2014, 151–162); God could dictate (timeless) natural laws that were binding on rulers, but their indeterminacy required rulers to issue (timely) human laws and judgments that specified the content of natural laws (Campos, 2014); a ruler could be a good Christian prince simply by following the moral precepts of Christianity, often established in the medieval literary genre of "mirrors for princes," but he still required the more experienced counsel of courts and nobles (Keane, 2009, 169–188).

The European invention of the mechanical clock in 1354 reconfigured this framework. Phenomena such as more complex financial instruments, increasing trade routes, and the proliferation of print culture (Anderson, 1991) facilitated the regularization of clock and calendrical time, thereby creating the conditions for shared temporal contexts.

Such novel, common measures of temporality depended less on the cycles of nature and God's will than before—they were secular. The transfer of authority from the church to temporal powers that began to take place during this period was also a process in which God's eternal authority was traded for a durational authority (Pocock, 2009, 53–56). The consequence was not so much the introduction of linear time into political contexts (Anderson, 1991) but rather the slow fading out of historical cyclical time in politics.

Machiavelli's political theory stands out as the Renaissance's clearest formulation of the power of politics to counter the apparently inevitable cycles of fate and corruption. For authors such as J. G. A. Pocock (2009, 405), this triumph of secular political time over the cycles of history and God's arbitrary will is a distinctive characteristic of early modern politics. Even in Machiavelli, however, this triumph should be regarded as gradual. Machiavelli's account of history shows the unmistakable marks of Polybius at work. His commendation of republican rule in the *Discourses on Livy* is based on the Polybian idea that this sort of mixed constitution is a possible way to forestall the otherwise inevitable collapse and regrowth of political regimes—a temporally ordered republic can ward off corruption. While not strictly Polybian in character, this insight comports well with the cyclical assumptions of Polybius's *Histories* (Coby, 1999, 278–280; Nederman and Sullivan, 2012).¹ Linear and cyclical time remain connected, although the former opposes the latter. Even though the forces of nature and fortune (*fortuna*) are insurmountable, their impact on human affairs can be reduced. This is one of the critical justifications of virtue (*virtù*) as impetuousness or resistance that we find in *The Prince*, especially its final pages. The forethought of virtuous rulers is not simply prudential or adaptative to change or chance, following classical notions of *pronoia*. Instead, the virtue of rulers lies in their capacity to reshape history, to prevent fortune from being the sole cause of historical events (Vatter, 2013, 109–110), and to hinder the cyclical course of time.

For Machiavelli, the past contains many examples of virtue that should be studied and imitated. His *Discourses* reflect this belief. It is often the case, however, that the contingencies of politics require more than the mere imitation of the ancients—it is necessary to improve upon them. The virtuous rulers need to strike a balance between reproducing the past and reshaping the future: they re-enact the actions of the commonwealth's founding fathers in each of their decisions, all the while forcing fortune to yield to the flexibility of their political mastery. The difficulty inherent in this task justifies establishing a mixed regime, where both patricians and the people hold some form of authority (Machiavelli, 1996, I.2). Different temporalities coexist in this mixed regime, since the “humors” of the people are reactive and focused on the present, whereas those of patricians are active and set on the future.

The conditions are ripe for conceiving of political time in a distinctively modern way. The belief that chance can be tamed and the conventional measurement of clock-time led to growing confidence in man's power over nature and in the ability to understand natural patterns without resorting to teleology. Scientific measurement provides the tools for foreseeing the future, thus reinforcing the process of secularization. The justification of political authority no longer relies on a notion of the divine or on the

deconstruction of a social whole that appears in history beforehand. Instead, the scientific method finds its way to the political realm, giving rise to the possibility of a science of politics—a science whose method is inductive and compositive, focused on efficient rather than teleological causation. The road is open to individualism and consent as the building blocks of political legitimacy.

MULTITEMPORAL CONSENT IN MODERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Authorization and consent have a history in political theory that can be traced as far back as Plato's *Crito* and the Greek Sophists (Gough, 1957; Medina, 1990). Even in medieval times, there was a proliferation of speculative inquiry into how a mass of individuals could give rise to a political community. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers such as Manegold of Lautenbach, Engelbert of Volesdorf, John of Paris, and Nicholas of Cusa engaged in these debates (Lessnoff, 1986, 5). The thesis that a community is a partnership created by the agreement of its members appears explicitly in M. Salamonius's *De principatu*, from 1512 to 1514. In all such views, though, consent refers chiefly to an alliance between the community and its ruler. Even in later thinkers such as Richard Hooker or Huguenots like François Hotman, Théodore de Bèze, Philippe de Mornay (author of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*), or George Buchanan, for whom political society was both natural and a human artifact, consent played a relevant role in explaining forms of government, even though not in justifying political authority (Campos, 2019b).

The emergence of authorization and consent as primordial elements of political legitimacy is a modern creation. Phenomena such as individualism, secularism, the resolute-compositive method applied to politics, the pressure to find common moral ground against a backdrop of religious strife, and the appearance of complex political structures such as nation-states prompted modern authors to develop the notion that society, government, and moral principles depended, first and foremost, on the constitutive actions of individual agents. Social contract theories are the product of this tendency, whether they focus on explaining the origins of government or on justifying political structures. Legitimate political authority exists only where some form of consent of the governed can be established.

This link between legitimacy and consent introduces a novel timescale to normative political theory. Whether actual or hypothetical, consent is imputed only to those who are to be the addressees of government and able to take on obligations and give or omit consent. Past and future people are not consent givers in this sense.² This particularity leads to a commonplace interpretation of modern secular political time as involving three interrelated characteristics.

The first is that modernity affects a break with the past by undervaluing the role of tradition in public affairs (Koselleck, 2004; Latour, 1993, 10; Osborne, 1995, 13–17; Brunner,

2007). The past only plays a role in structuring or validating political authorities if present persons' consent instantiates it. The second characteristic is that moral and political institutions are justified only in relation to how they can shape and tame the future. Legitimacy becomes an entirely future-oriented paradigm—the language of contracts and promises attests to this feature (Gellner, 1967, 53; Dunn, 1996, 93; Fritzsche, 2004). And the third is the temptation to privilege the present to such a degree that each generation is given complete control over its destiny. This temptation, which can supposedly be traced back to Rousseau's concept of the general will and appears prominently in such authors as Noah Webster, Thomas Paine, Adam Smith, Jacques Turgot, Condorcet, and Thomas Jefferson (Rubinfeld, 2001, 17–44), gives rise to two major debates in the Enlightenment because there are two different ways of resisting it. One way, which can be found in Edmund Burke³ and in the arguments leveled by James Madison against Jefferson,⁴ is to claim that communities have a cross-temporal nature and that original founding moments are sufficiently strong to endure several generations. The other way is to claim that consent is not actual but entirely hypothetical, and therefore the principles of political legitimacy that stem from it are timeless.

These characteristics of modern political time are surmised independently of inquiries into the expressive nature of consent. Different forms of consent (typically, explicit, tacit, hypothetical, and quasi-consent) (Knowles, 2010, 94–129; Wendt, 2018, 17–36) may have different consequences for political time. For instance, an explicit foundational agreement involves durational time, whereas hypothetical consent seems timeless. Social contract theorists such as Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Rousseau, who conceive of contracts as constitutive of society in an explicit manner, could then be interpreted as privileging linear time. Locke, who assumes that states such as Rome, Venice, and Peru were founded by explicit consent (Locke, 1960, §§102–103), maintains that later generations give tacit consent when they inherit property from their fathers (1960, §§117–122), and so would also seem to rely on linear time. Authors such as Paine, Jefferson, and especially Condorcet (1994, 190–227), who set temporal limits on constitutions and established an expiration date for legitimacy acquired by consent produced in a single instant (Urbinati, 2004; Cohen, 2018, 71–82), would reveal a close proximity to quasi-consent and to cyclical time. And an emphasis on hypothetical consent, such as Kant's, would express timeless principles of legitimacy.

The connection between time and consent is more robust than this, however. Modern authors often treat consent differently, depending on whether they consider it a psychological (not a moral) element or the foundation of political legitimacy (Riley, 1973, 555). They also often refer to consent in a way that emphasizes its temporal aspect rather than the means by which we express it, for example when they use the term “explicit” to refer to an original compact and the term “tacit” to refer to consent over time. In this light, rather than deriving different timescales from different means of expressing consent, it is possible to conceive of consent as time-dependent. Different timescales of consent may involve different forms of temporal expression, rather than the other way around.

The commonplace interpretation of modern secular political time and its three characteristics (the break with the past, future-orientedness, presentism) thus relies on a

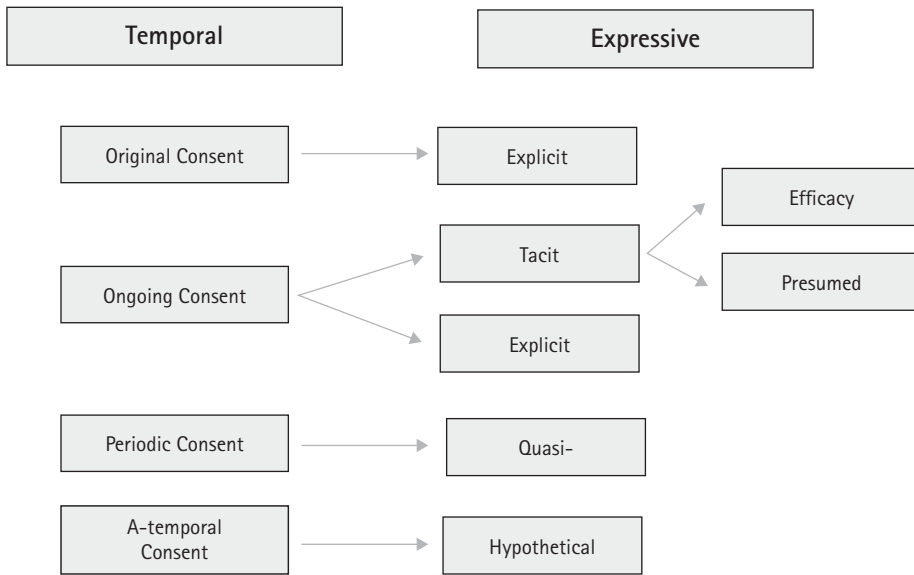


FIGURE 23.1: Time-dependent consent.

misconception of temporal consent. Within the framework of time-dependent consent, modern political theorists adopt more than one kind of consent as relevant to political legitimacy. Modern consent theories are inherently multitemporal (see Figure 23.1).

For instance, the idea that consent plays a crucial role in legitimizing political institutions at the moment of their foundation expresses a single-moment view. Theorists such as Hobbes, Pufendorf, Locke, and Rousseau, who conceive of an original compact in the sense that one moment in time serves as an impermeable constitutive boundary, express this single-moment view of *original consent*. Beyond the original moment nothing matters, and so there is a break with the past; the original moment justifies what is to occur after it, and so it is future oriented. Similarly, theorists such as Paine, Jefferson, and Condorcet, who believe that citizens should be called to express consent cyclically, establish short timeframes for legitimacy and therefore seem to rely on a form of *periodic consent* that resembles presentism. Theorists such as James Madison and Kant, who privilege durational constitutionalism and republicanism consonant with rational principles that could be endorsed by rational citizens, are representatives of *atemporal consent*, which is different from presumed consent because it is based on a counterfactual rather than actual lack of dissent. The only modern response to presentism would then be timelessness, even if that entailed giving up consent altogether—as was the case with Bentham, who insisted on a utilitarian foundation for political authority in the place of custom and consent, thereby establishing a future-directed logic in his plans for legal reform (Brunner, 2007).

However, such categorizations fall short of depicting modern political theories of time accurately because neither original, nor periodic, nor atemporal consent is sufficient to establish legitimacy. *Ongoing forms of consent* are needed to complete the link between

consent and legitimacy. Ongoing consent can be explicit or tacit. It is explicit when habits of obedience are constitutive facts of sovereignty, as seen in Bentham and Austin (Hart, 1982, 220–242). Rather than implying the “rejection of the idea that any actions in the historical past could rightly constrain the rational determination of present actions” (Lane, 2000, 243), the Benthamite “habit of obedience” (Bentham, 1988, I.12, IV.35) requires a connection with the past and is normative today with regard to the future.

Ongoing consent can also be tacit, in two respects. The first consists of the efficacy of norms and commands issued by *de facto* authorities, as *ex post* consent. Locke’s reference to a voluntary receipt of benefits arising from inheritance laws protected by government is an excellent example of this kind of tacit consent. The second is presumed consent, which depends on a lack of explicit dissent. Silence (lack of dissent) is the relevant fact of consent, but it only counts as consent because it activates a presumption rule that imposes consent as the default position (Mueller, 2016, 135). This presumption rule is binding because it follows from a prior convention, in the form of original consent, *established in the past*.⁵ This also holds true for periodic consent, which requires ongoing consent between durational thresholds. For Turgot, Condorcet, Paine, Smith, and Jefferson, each new generation is free to set the terms of consent to pre-established authorities that purport to renew their legitimacy. This means that generational self-determination is primarily concerned with the freedom of future generations,⁶ rather than a defense of presentism (Cohen, 2018, 77); equally, it means that until a new generation comes along to replace the previous one, no break with the past is acceptable (Smith, 1999).

Additionally, defenses of atemporal consent cannot forgo some level of temporal actuality. Rousseau is a good example of this. His notion of the general will, for instance in the *Geneva Manuscript*, is “not that of a past time but of the present moment” (Rousseau, 1978, 157) and seems overly presentist. But the same notion is often distinguished from “the will of all” (Rousseau, 1997, 60) in that it amounts to a transcendent criterion for determining the common interest—“what generalises the will is not so much the number of voices, as it is the common interest which unites them” (Rousseau, 1997, 62). In this latter sense, the general will remains constant and unalterable. The general will is then actual (present-minded) and transcendent (atemporal) in a cumulative way (Bertram, 2012).

Kant also provides a good example. His notion of the original contract is “only an idea of reason” that binds every legislator to regard each subject “as if he has joined in voting” (Kant, 1996, 296–297). In this sense, it is pure and *a priori*—timeless. However, the entitlements that individuals have as “an innate right of humanity” can only be consistently enjoyed by all in a condition of joint enforcement. The transition from the state of nature to the juridical state that he mentions in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant, 1996, 450–452) transforms private law into public law. Publicity is the feature of legislation (i) in conformity with the universal principle of right and (ii) joined with power, that is, with an authorization to coerce. Individual persons can only enjoy their rightful freedom if they can exercise it because public law secures it. The difference between public law and the *status civilis* is neither simple conformity with the universal principle

of right nor actual coercion, but rather the fact that provisional lawgiving (Ellis, 2005) becomes preemptory (Campos, 2019a). The timeless mechanism of legitimacy only produces external freedom in a durational process.

We find in these authors and in the late modern proliferation of constitutional experiences an attempt to develop justifications and design institutions that balance multiple and simultaneous political time perceptions. In authors such as Hobbes and Rousseau, multitemporality unfolds only at the level of justification. Their views of the sovereign and of the general will as absolute remove temporal limits to political rule. But certain authors, such as Locke and Condorcet, apply multitemporality to actual decision-making procedures (Cohen, 2018, 76–77). Montesquieu's influential theory on the separation of powers is the corollary of this tendency to think of political institutions as involving different rhythms and time horizons, both in terms of legitimacy and in terms of decision-making procedures. Checks and balances also carve out durations of time and are therefore multitemporal.

TIME AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Current debates on political legitimacy are often interpreted as centering on the right balance between various temporal modes. Whereas contractualists and liberal-egalitarians provide methods and instruments for justifying forms of democracy that are dependent on “present-tense” or “tenseless” kinds of rational choice, conservatives, libertarians, communitarians, and deliberative democrats accuse them of being overly focused on the short term and of failing to acknowledge the role played by history and dialogical decision-making across time (Lane, 2000).

This view suffers from oversimplification, however, and requires two corrections. On the one hand, the apparent overreliance on the past in some schools of thought is justified only in light of the role that the future plays in present political action. This applies equally to historical determinism, classical conservatism, communitarianism, and certain kinds of libertarianism. On the other hand, the operation of legitimacy developed by liberal egalitarians is not necessarily tenseless but involves significant regard to both the future and the past.

Connecting the Past with the Future

For modern thinkers, the break with the past is limited. Conversely, tradition carries only limited weight. Such limitedness transpires to political theories that are often read as overly relying on history. For instance, the difference between conservative thinkers such as Burke and the liberal theorists that helped to establish the revolutionary

mindset is not so much a difference between evaluative preferences for tradition or a future-directed logic, but a reconfiguration of the justificatory power of traditions and future-oriented institutions. Whereas conservatives believed that the past provided a sufficiently robust justification of present institutions, modern liberals depreciated tradition not because it was linked to the past but because it was an insufficient justification for binding the present.⁷ But even Burke thought that societies were partnerships between past, present, and future persons alike, which suggests that tradition was sufficient to justify the existence of present institutions, albeit not the actual policies conducted by present institutions, which needed to account for the future.

A similarly limited reliance on the past appears in dialectical views of history, whose rationale depends chiefly on how world history will culminate. For historical materialists, for instance, history is a process that is governed by laws and that unfolds as an endless chain of changes in social interrelations (Marx and Engels, 1845, 27), the primary engine of which is material production. This view has led some interpreters to consider Marxism a form of technological determinism that reflects linearity by establishing direct relations between economic causes and the effects that flow from it (Cohen, 1978). The role of determinism should not be inflated, however. Present agency plays a sizeable part in shaping history. Indeed, historical materialism's approach to history is not necessarily teleological (De Gregory, 2003, 19–20); history is a record of successive steps toward ever more effective control over the world. The one genuinely acceptable deterministic proposition in Marxism is the idea that such control is bound to arise at some point in the form of socialism. However, the timing and location of this transition are still to be determined by the dynamics of the superstructure and by the development of productive forces (Jossa, 2018). Political institutions of the present are justified only to the extent that they aim to produce those conditions left undetermined and to bring the work of liberation to completion in the name of future generations.

Communitarian views, however, claim to defend the beliefs, values, and practices of actually existing historical communities. Individuals are born into preexisting communities, and thus the self is situated in existing social practices (Taylor, 1979, 157). This social precedence has consequences for beliefs about justice, the good life, and the relation between the two since these beliefs are shaped by membership in historically rooted communities (Sandel, 1982). This does not imply an exclusive focus on the past, however. Communities are transgenerational, and individuals have responsibilities in transgenerational communities if they share “lifetime-transcending interests” (Thompson, 2009), that is, interests that have as their subject matter events, objects, or states of affairs that preexist or transcend a member's lifetime. Responsibilities to the future are part of the strategy for preserving the cultural identity of communities.

Libertarian perspectives are methodologically different. Their reference is not the individual in the community but the individual prior to the community. The past is as important to libertarians as to communitarians, however. For Nozick, for instance, presocial rights govern the legitimacy of property acquisition and transfer, such that the just ownership of an item is determined solely by the history of just transactions involving it. Commodities are inextricably tied to owners by their history of production,

acquisition, and exchange (Nozick, 1974, 198). Still, individual liberty requires a legitimate acquisition test, a sort of protection achieved only by the enforcement of a proviso requiring that “at least where there is enough and as good [is] left for others” (Locke, 1960, §27). This Lockean proviso (Nozick, 1974, 178) has a future-oriented application and a cross-temporal formulation: “the continued legitimacy of private ownership from the standpoint of self-ownership depends on each successive generation obtaining the equivalent of a per capita share of unimproved, undegraded land” (Arneson, 1991, 53). The libertarian approach focuses on knowing the extent to which one’s existence deprives someone else of something from which she would otherwise have benefited. The Lockean proviso functions as a guardian of individual liberty across time.

Reconfiguring Timelessness

Different attempts to answer the problem of political obligation and legitimate authority refer unevenly to time. Gratitude and membership seem inextricably linked to the past, whereas prudence is fixated upon the future (Dunn, 1996, 83). Consent depends on the (more-or-less extended) present, whereas theories of natural duty, fair cooperation, and religious political naturalism seem to build on an atemporal conception of political obligation (Mueller, 2016).

The move to separate the authority of history from problems of legitimacy is often associated with a preference for timeless principles. In this framework, criteria of legitimacy are universally valid, and they contain particular images of social order and values aimed at binding societies and individuals in order to produce forms of political obedience. Their application method is a top-down approach—“vertical time-binding” (Mueller, 2016, 97–127).

Rawls’s liberal-egalitarianism often appears as an illustration of such timelessness. His notion of the social contract operates as a device of reason used to illuminate which basic principles of justice it would be rational to choose from a fair, impartial viewpoint. In these circumstances (“the original position”), one has no knowledge of one’s spatial, social, or temporal location. In addition, those in the original position are mutually disinterested in each other’s talents, beliefs, and goals. The principles chosen in such circumstances for guiding society’s basic structure are rational and timeless, not in the sense of claiming validity for all historical periods but insofar as their validity is not grounded in any historical facts. Political legitimacy must yield only to the dictates of reason and therefore seems immune to the yoke of time.

We should be careful about endorsing this interpretation of Rawls’s theory, however. Rawls is committed to the idea that justice as fairness will be the result of the choice procedure, but temporality intervenes at several points in the choice procedure and in the application of the principles arising from that procedure.

First, rational persons in the original position can coherently arrange their purposes and commitments in a “rational plan of life” that extends over their lifetimes (Rawls, 1999, sect. 63). For Rawls, rational persons do not give preference to any particular

period of their lives and are equally concerned with their (future) good at each stage of their lives. The rational plan of life is what defines a good life for them and is an essential element of the choice procedure.

Second, the choice procedure depends on two arguments: the contract argument and the intuitive argument. Legitimacy arises only from a procedure of “reflective equilibrium” between the results of the social contract thought experiment and one’s intuitions about justice. Rawls’s reflective equilibrium is a method in moral deliberation in which we move back and forth between our judgments (or beliefs, intuitions, considerations, etc.) about particular instances and the principles (or reasons, theoretical considerations, rules, etc.) that bear on accepting such judgments, revising elements when necessary to achieve reasonable coherence among them. In other words, the definitive formulation of the *nomoi* depends on an equilibrium between the initial generality of the contractual procedure and the particularity (also in time) of *kairos* about justice. In reflective equilibrium, coherence arises not only when judgments are in line at all levels of generality but also when they provide support for other judgments. Coherence is the relation of consistency between the broadest set of judgments and beliefs and the moral principles that support them. Moral judgment is justified if it coheres with the rest of one’s judgments about right action, after appropriate revisions. Ultimately, the supposedly timeless principles emerge from a temporal procedure insofar as reflective equilibrium consists of a coherent defense of moral justification.

Third, reflective equilibrium is responsive to the challenges posed to existing judgments by arguments that derive from diverse positions in ethics (Rawls, 1999, 43). Under a developed notion of overlapping consensus (Rawls, 1993, 386), the rationale for moral action arises from distinctive features of different, albeit sufficiently comprehensive, moral views. Justice as fairness addresses a set of essential moral principles that each person understands from her comprehensive view. Such views, however, are comprehensive to the extent that they are consistent with the principles emerging from reflective equilibrium, that is, consistent with generally recognized intuitive ideas present in the public culture of liberal societies, which are historically situated communities. Justice as fairness is rooted in the temporally located culture of liberal societies.

Fourth, even if general, the principles of justice are sensitive to temporality as they apply equally across different generations. In the original position, the participants in the choice procedure are unaware of their actual generation. This leads them to determine a “just savings rate.” Intergenerational relations change according to different stages of social development. At the accumulation stage, present generations are bound by a savings principle to the extent that it is necessary to enable subsequent generations to stay above a minimum threshold of justice. The savings principle includes preserving the gains of culture and civilization, maintaining fair institutions, and putting aside a suitable amount of funds to guarantee a sustainable and just basic structure over time (Rawls, 1999, 254). At a later stage, in which fair institutions have been established, the savings principle is substituted by an obligation to leave future generations at least the equivalent of what present generations received from the previous generation (Rawls, 1999, 257).

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a concise survey of time in the history of political theory and makes a case for the thesis that temporality, involving double regard for the past and the future, is a necessary feature of normative political theory. Time plays an important role in theories of political legitimacy, albeit at different levels. Whereas strong temporal conceptions of legitimacy establish that time is a crucial aspect of the normative criteria in light of which claims to authority are legitimate, other conceptions of legitimacy can be formulated in tenseless terms even if they require time in the particularity of political judgments.

Throughout history, problems of legitimacy and political obligation show traces of complex conceptions of multitemporality. This transpires to contemporary political theory. For instance, the operation of legitimacy developed by liberal egalitarians is, contrary to what is often stated, not necessarily tenseless. And the apparent emphasis that some schools seem to put on the past is justified mostly in light of the role that the future plays in present political action. With variants, this applies to historical determinism, classical conservatism, communitarianism, and libertarianism. The weight of temporal legitimacy shows that normative political theory is inherently cross-temporal and that the resurgence of themes that appeal to specific temporal forms of legitimacy (e.g., the revival of nationalism and populist language, identity politics, reparations for past wrongs) is based perhaps on an erroneous distinction between temporal and tenseless conceptions of legitimacy.

NOTES

1. For the opposite view, see Yoran 2010.
2. When authors such as Hobbes, Locke, and Pufendorf illustrate their social contract theories by mentioning the case of certain peoples in the Americas, they are not assuming that original compacts are historical facts that occurred at some point in the past. Rather, they establish historical examples of conflict and consent while insisting that the social contract is methodological and explanatory in nature. David Hume's famous criticism of historical implausibility leveled against social contract doctrines (Hume, 1987, 470–471) is a straw man argument. No social contract theorist, including Hobbes, Locke, Pufendorf, Spinoza, and Rousseau, maintains that the founding compacts are historical facts (Medina, 1990, 138).
3. Burke envisions society as a “partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born” (Burke, 2001, 261). Paine is thinking of Burke when he claims in *Rights of Man* that “[e]very age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases, as the ages and generations which preceded it. . . . [A]s government is for the living, and for the dead, it is the living only that has any right to it” (Paine 1961, 251, 254). Burke's conservatism gives voice to a way of preserving a premodern sense of community that was expressed by authors such as Richard Hooker as early as 1593: “corporations are immortal; we are alive in our predecessors, and they in their successors do live still” (Hooker, 1969, 195).

4. In a letter to Madison dated September 6, 1789, Jefferson takes it to be “self evident, that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living: that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it” (Smith, 1995, 632). His line of reasoning aims to justify limitations on debt and other governmental actions and calls for the explicit expression of consent every nineteen years. Madison’s reply focused on the continuous renewal of generations and on tacit consent: “If this assent can not be given tacitly, or be not implied where no positive evidence forbids, persons born in Society would not on attaining ripe age be bound by the acts of the Majority; and either a unanimous repetition of every law would be necessary on the accession of new members, or an express assent must be obtained from these to the rule by which the voice of the Majority is made the voice of the whole” (Smith, 1995, 652).
5. Hobbes and Rousseau endorse this kind of presumed consent, albeit differently. Both agree that silence activates the presumption rule, but their different conceptions of sovereignty lead them to focus on different agents. Whereas Hobbes maintains in the *Leviathan* that custom is binding when the sovereign is silent (Hobbes, 1968, 313), Rousseau claims in *The Social Contract* that what “the chiefs” command is binding when the people are silent (Rousseau, 1997, 57–58). Bentham, albeit privileging explicit ongoing consent in habits of obedience, also endorses presumed consent in certain instances: the disposition to obey may have either habit or a convention as its cause, and whereas “a convention arises from the will of any one moment which the will of any other moment may revoke, habit is the result of a system of conduct of which the commencement is lost in the abyss of time” (Bentham, 1843, 219).
6. See, for instance, Adam Smith’s formulation of the problem: “The earth and the fullness of it belongs to every generation, and the preceding one can have no right to bind it up from posterity” (Smith, 1896, 124).
7. Fallibilism was one of the reasons for this insufficiency: as Mill claims in *On Liberty*, “ages are no more infallible as individuals” (Mill, 1991, 20). Emancipation from natural determinism was another: the rational man should act upon nature rather than simply reacting to it, as the emergence of the French Republican Calendar illustrated (Perovic, 2012, 30).

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CHAPTER 24

TIME AND DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION

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DELIBERATION is a way of making decisions that require “justification through public argument” (Cohen, 1989, 21). Deliberative democracy is a conception of democracy. It requires institutions and procedures to support people in the endeavor to arrive at collectively justifiable decisions (Neblo, 2015). Deliberative democracy has dominated theoretical debates in the last three decades, and it has received ever-increasing attention in political science, sociology, and policymaking. While first-generation deliberative democrats, such as Jürgen Habermas (1996) and John Rawls (2005), focused on the normative justification of the theory, second-generation theorists working on deliberative democracy, as Stephen Elstub (2010) reports, have engaged in debate on opportunities for institutionalization and, more recently, have investigated specific institutional reforms and ways to combine deliberative aspirations with the multidimensional character of representative government in large-scale and pluralistic democracies. As a result of this success, real or presumed innovations and several democratic experiments have popped up all around the globe (Elstub, 2014; Gastil and Knobloch, 2020; Pogrebinschi, 2018; Smith, 2009). To borrow from Simone Chambers (2003), deliberative democrats have moved beyond the “theoretical stage” and into the “working theory” stage. Yet, even if the literature on democratic deliberation and deliberative democracies covers a great deal of normative and practical ground, only a few studies have investigated the topic of time and democratic deliberation.

In reality, time, deadlines, and waiting periods, as Elizabeth Cohen (2018, 62) argues, shape our political processes. Durational time should therefore be understood as something that is regarded as having value to members of society (Cohen, 2018, 64). The correct management and distribution of durational time can forge processes, reflect specific priorities, and encourage certain outcomes (Cohen, 2018, 66–67). Democratic decision-making processes also are replete with temporal rhetoric, timing indexicals, and complaints about the length of time it takes to get things done (Hom, 2020a). Discussions surrounding Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, “reflect,” as

Andrew Hom (2020b, 10–11) writes, “an elevated importance for time over the past few years, with both politicians and the wider population describing it as an overwhelming force, an ever-expanding now, a valuable and dwindling resource, a dimension of hope, a lever, even a herald of independence.” Social acceleration, as William E. Scheuerman argues in his chapter in this volume, risks destroying the temporal clockwork of separation of powers.¹

Scholars have approached the issue of time and democratic deliberation in two ways.² First, deliberative democrats have studied deliberation *in* time. They have developed sequential models to give plausible explanations for the chain of different, yet interconnected, steps in large-scale deliberative systems (Bächtiger et al., 2010; Curato, 2012; Goodin, 2005; Parkinson, 2006). Second, social and political theorists, more or less sympathetic to the principles of deliberative democracy, have investigated deliberation *through* time. In so doing, they have drawn attention to the inadequacy of deliberation in an accelerated society (Rosa, 2013; Scheuerman, 2004; Wolin, 1997). This chapter delves into these debates and sows the seeds for future research on time and democratic deliberation. The first section of this chapter presents sequential approaches to deliberative democracy. The second section surveys time-sensitive critiques of deliberation. It introduces a fundamental distinction between the pace and the length of deliberation. In so doing, the section presents and assesses normative questions about the slowness and inconclusiveness of deliberation. Both critics and supporters of deliberation tend to see inconclusiveness as a problem. The third and fourth sections reassess inconclusiveness in normative disputes about deliberative democracies. The third section investigates the fundamental deliberative commitment to fallibilism in order to advance a more favorable reading of inconclusiveness. The fourth section concludes by presenting a research avenue for future work on inconclusiveness and deliberation.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY IN TIME

When deliberative democrats talk about time, they try to shed light on how different stages of democratic decision-making connect with one another in a systemic framework. A systemic framework claims that deliberation is a feature within “a set of distinguishable, differentiated, but to some degree interdependent parts, often with distributed functions and a division of labour, connected in such a way as to form a complex whole” (Mansbridge et al., 2012, 4). Sequential models describe the process leading from informal public spheres to formal mechanisms that generate policy options and make collectively binding decisions (Parkinson, 2018, 439). The framework entails dividing deliberative democracies into smaller sequences in order to unpack problems, styles, and virtues at each stage of the process.

Robert Goodin (2005, 188–189) divides the operation of representative democracy into four different stages (caucus room, parliamentary debate, election campaign, and

postelection arguing and bargaining). Each stage exhibits a different virtue and, therefore, should be judged against the deliberative virtue most likely to be found. In the same vein, Nicole Curato (2012, 440) proposes a sequential analysis to account for the emergence of different deliberative virtues as well as transitions and shifts in roles as the deliberative process approaches collectively binding solutions. Between the articulation of a difference of opinion and the conclusion, Curato (2012, 426) identifies three stages of deliberation, each with its own deliberative virtue and speech style. Confrontation is the stage in which parties express their disagreement over issues. They may cast doubt on other points of view, or they may use dissident tactics, such as marches, sit-ins, public shaming, and strikes. The opening stage establishes the rules of argumentation and therefore enables public deliberation. In the argumentation stage, parties deliberate and progress toward a solution to disagreement.

André Bächtiger et al. (2010, 56) also argue that deliberation can integrate different forms of communication at different stages. The fundamental idea is that relaxing the commitment to rational discourse brings scholars to recognize that alternative forms of communication—such as storytelling, rhetoric, and emotional discourses—may be combined with truly deliberative sequences (Bächtiger et al., 2010, 38). In their view, alternative forms of communication in earlier stages can counteract power asymmetries and contribute to strengthening deliberative capacities. In later stages, parties integrate and weigh different proposals by connecting them with generalizable interests.

John Parkinson (2006) provides the best-known sequential model of large-scale deliberative democracy. His key observation is that in order to create legitimate decisions, the right techniques should be activated at the right time. It is against this backdrop that it becomes important to think about how different institutions can contribute to different steps in a larger decision-making process. Parkinson (2006, chap. 7) notes that even if political processes are chaotic and marked by a series of overlapping and simultaneous actions, four decision-making stages (define, discuss, decide, and implement) can be identified, with certain democratic agents actively contributing to one stage while others concentrate on different stages.

Sequential approaches reaffirm that deliberative democracies are more than a sum of discrete and static phenomena. How and when different mechanisms connect with one another can affect the overall perception of legitimacy in significant ways (Curato, 2012; Parkinson, 2006). How and when different voices are included in the collective decision-making process can also affect the overall perception of legitimacy in significant ways (Fumagalli, 2019). How and when one participates in such processes can vary depending on the extent to which other parties are close to an agreement, agree on a solution, or continue to disagree. Time may be distributed unfairly. For instance, without sufficiently strong procedural constraints, such as a requisite of unanimity, the disproportionate exercise of speaking opportunities by the most powerful parties corrodes the equal standing of other participants and their capacity to influence the outcome (Karpowitz et al., 2012, 545). Moreover, for substantive representation of disadvantaged groups, it is important that members of the disadvantaged group air their perspectives and insights repeatedly at all stages (Karpowitz et al., 2012, 545).

Despite their explanatory merits, sequential models represent time essentially as a generalized condition in which different events unfold. In so doing, they represent the passage of time as a neutral experience. Time, therefore, does not have any political quality; rather, it helps to provide a more realistic picture of deliberation as a process that, like most social phenomena, can be redescribed as a temporal sequence of different components.

In reality, democratic deliberation and, more generally, deliberative democracies, just as much as all other instances of individual and collective reasoning, develop *through time*. As time passes, operations that are performed in order to produce something may evolve and therefore require us to rethink procedures and decisions. It is also for this reason that democratic theorists in the pragmatist tradition (Dewey, 1946; Anderson, 2006; Knight and Johnson, 2011) argue that democratic processes and their results should be “subject to constant and well-equipped observation of the consequences they entail when acted upon” (Dewey, 1946, 202).³ For example, Jack Knight and James Johnson (2011, 169) claim that decision-making procedures should be reflective and therefore structured so as to monitor and assess their own performance. Elizabeth Anderson (2006) argues that decision-making procedures should enable citizens to predict, act, and solve problems through harmonizing the competing partial viewpoints found in their communities. Within this framework, Anderson claims that democratic deliberation should be understood as having three phases (talk, vote, and feedback). In the talk phase, parties discuss what constitutes an object of shared interests and exchange reasons for and against possible solutions. In the voting phase, parties make decisions. In the feedback phase, deliberation continues to monitor, assess, and amend policy solutions (Anderson, 2006, 9).

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY *THROUGH* TIME

For a thorough examination of the relationship between time and democratic deliberation, it is also important to better understand what it means for democratic deliberation to unfold *through* time. Just as much as spatial concerns (Stevenson, 2016) have motivated a debate over large-scale democratic deliberation, temporal concerns have induced widespread skepticism surrounding the viability and justifiability of democratic deliberation and, therefore, about the legitimacy of its decisions.

In the past three decades, social and political theorists have paid increasing attention to social acceleration (Connolly, 2002; Leccardi, 1991; Rosa, 2013; Rosa and Scheuerman, 2009; Scheuerman, 2004; Wolin, 1997). It is against this backdrop that critics of deliberative democracy conclude that commitment to reasoned and inclusive deliberation is inadequate in a world that runs fast and requires several simultaneous decisions on different topics. In so doing, however, such critics conflate arguments about the pace of democratic deliberation with arguments about its durational time. Pace-focused critiques seek to demonstrate that democratic deliberation, and deliberative

democracy more generally, is too slow. Those concerned about durational time argue that democratic deliberation is inconclusive. The two lines of argument pursue the same purpose—demonstrating the inadequacy of democratic deliberation in an accelerated society—but, on closer inspection, they have different, yet equally questionable, theoretical grounding.

Even if deliberation could become open to a wider range of voices which would strengthen the legitimacy of democratic decisions, the complaint remains very common that democratic deliberation is slow (Rosa, 2013; Wolin, 1997). As Hartmut Rosa (2013) writes, late modern society tends to become at once more pluralistic and more postconventional. Within this context, the process of interest communication, collection, and amalgamation through democratic deliberation becomes slower. William Scheuerman (2004, 200) comments that democratic deliberation seems “oblivious to temporal concerns altogether.” Sheldon Wolin (1997, 3) warns against those who mistake “the tempos of deliberation and contemplation for the temporal rhythms of contemporary culture and economy.”

Rosa, Scheuerman, and Wolin criticize the pace of democratic deliberation. Especially considering that highly centralized political systems can decide and act quickly, deliberative democrats, and democrats more generally, as Michael Saward (2017, 371) writes, face a number of serious questions: “Is the task to speed democracy up, or to slow the world down? . . . Is the obvious answer to the pressures of high-speed society a high-speed democracy—or fast democracy?”

Several deliberative democrats have therefore looked at ways to speed up democratic deliberation in pluralistic societies. This, in part, explains the interest in new media, technological innovations, and Internet debates, chats, and online fora (Chambers and Gastil, 2021). Nevertheless, the need to find ways to quickly translate a large number of private opinions into a genuinely public opinion, as Rosa (2013, 266–267) himself admits, may end up favoring more immediate forms of public communication, such as images and symbols.

In reality, there is also a group (Eberling, 1996; MacKenzie, 2018; Saward, 2011) of progressive deliberative democrats advocating deceleration through stronger control over political decision-making processes. Advocates of deliberative democracy contend that democratic deliberation enables citizens to multiply moments of popular control over the representativeness of collectively binding decisions. For instance, as Michael MacKenzie (2018, 252) puts it, “short electoral cycles, short-sighted voters, and the influence of powerful groups with short-term interests (such as corporations) make governing for the long term difficult, even when decision-makers are committed to addressing long-term problems.”

Critics of democratic deliberation tend to be impatient with the slowness of democratic deliberation. They stress the complications of will formation in pluralized societies in which the speed of technical and social innovations increases, and the number of necessary decisions grows (Rosa, 2013). In reality, deceleration, as opposed to acceleration, is more consistent with substantive and instrumental arguments for the justification of democracy.⁴

No one denies that in certain cases, such as in highly regimented forces primarily intended for warfare or the production of material goods, leaders, who are high in the chain of command, or top executives, who profit from high-speed labor, may commend quick transitions from problems to solutions. Yet within the context of democratic theory, a commitment to quickness would require procedures that reduce opportunities to control common decisions. And this would be questionable on both substantive and instrumental grounds. If seen through a substantive lens, acceleration may contradict the most fundamental democratic commitment to respecting individual agency and ensuring that, in a context in which the interests and perspectives of individuals diverge, democratic procedures treat all individuals as equal judges. If seen through an instrumental lens, acceleration may reduce the number of points of view included in democratic deliberation and therefore affect the quality of democratic outcomes.

The slow pace of deliberation can be a resource that inspires an alternative standpoint on the relationship between inclusion and timeliness within a fast-paced political environment. Democratic deliberation, following Saward (2017), can be seen as a way to institutionalize slowness and therefore use time to maintain order and work within the dominant fast-paced framework. Instead of adapting democratic deliberation to an accelerated world, this perspective maintains, democratic deliberation should be treated as a way to desynchronize politics and contain the effects of an accelerated world on democratic decision-making in pluralistic societies. For instance, several innovations across the globe, from assemblies and juries to participatory budgets and deliberative polls, have created opportunities for citizens to have their say, consider different options, change their mind, and, in some cases, reach a well-considered opinion on difficult issues (Elstub, 2014; Fung, 2003). Seen through these lenses, democratic deliberation, as a way to institutionalize slowness, has both instrumental and intrinsic merits.

Seen through an instrumental lens, democratic deliberation may multiply the opportunities for sharing situated knowledge (Saward, 2011, 3). At the transnational level, slowness, Saward says (2011, 14), enables us to “appreciate topographical complexities; to embrace an attentive and responsive pragmatism.” In parliaments, formal moment of delays can encourage public comments or insulate specialist committees from pressure groups (Saward, 2017, 373–374). At the local level, the institutionalization of slowness can invite parties to pause to consider customary views of social and political values (Saward, 2017, 375–377). Moreover, policy development necessitates turning an eye to the future. Anticipating risks, recognizing potentially affected publics, and uncovering potential consequences of majority decisions are standard operations that involve a time-sensitive perspective. In contexts in which several influential actors tend to have short-term goals, inclusive deliberation is an information-rich process that can support long-term thinking (MacKenzie and O’Doherty, 2011; MacKenzie, 2018).

Seen through a substantive lens, democratic deliberation and its uncommon timing modes can provide opportunities to control that common decisions are coherent with the ideal that all members of the political community must be regarded as equals (Saward, 2017, 373). At the global level, slowness can invite theorists to take the time and think of giving due weight to non-Western ways of conceptualizing democracy

(Saward, 2011, 7). In general, by requiring participants to respect reciprocity, inclusive deliberation, unlike mere aggregation or decision-making processes controlled by dominant powers, can create the conditions to identify truly shared objectives and, therefore, to talk about priorities that are more likely to support intergenerational cooperation (MacKenzie and O'Doherty, 2011).

Both Saward (2011, 2) and Rosa (2013, 254) think of the relationship between time and democratic deliberation mostly in terms of different speeds and speed-induced perceptions. In general, pioneering attempts to discuss democratic deliberation and time tend to conflate being lengthy and being slow. The difference between the two, however, is normatively significant and informs distinctive judgments about the relationship between time and democratic deliberation in an accelerated world. As Ian O'Flynn and Maija Setälä (2020, 2), two prominent advocates of democratic deliberation, admit, "Time is often short, evidence tends to be incomplete and risks and benefits can be highly uncertain." Mainstream policy analysts, as Frank Fischer and Piyapong Boossabong (2018, 588) say, complain that deliberative policy analysis "takes too much time and thus judge it to be an impractical adjunct to the policy making process." Arguments of this kind do not say that democratic deliberation is slow. They attest that democratic deliberation is too long and recognize that there might be a discrepancy in durational time between, on the one hand, participatory and deliberative will formation and, on the other, the adequate time span for decision-making in contemporary societies, which have to deal with a number of different problems simultaneously. Let me therefore focus on arguments about the durational time of democratic deliberation.

The difference between pace and durational time should be intuitive. It suffices to list a couple of examples. In one case, citizens are disappointed because their democratic representatives dismiss *too quickly* issues of their concern. In another case, executive members complain that from proposal to ratification, parliamentary discussions of emergency policies proceed *too slowly*. In these cases, one evaluates *how* parties move from one state of affairs to another. Let me turn to two more examples. Activists of minority groups may recognize that it is a *long* journey from lower courts to the Supreme Court of the United States. Citizens selected as jurors may believe that hearing testimony and evidence is a *never-ending experience*. In these examples, democratic citizens do not express judgment on the way one passes from one state of affairs to another; rather, they evaluate the time interval itself—the distance, in other words, between the beginning and the conclusion of a course of action.

The difference between length and pace is a nontrivial, yet underexplored, topic for deliberative democrats. In pace-related discourses, political theorists assess the capacity to move from disagreement to collectively binding decisions at a certain speed. John Locke (1964) famously argued that there is a difference between the deliberative approach of the legislator and the fast action of the executive. In the same vein, Saward (2017) defends a series of institutional features that would slow democratic institutions to address short-termism in public policy and include all affected parties. In arguments about durational time, the problem is that democratic deliberation cannot realistically reach a decision within the time constraints of the contemporary culture and economy.

Scholars (Buchstein, 2010; Goodin and Dryzek, 2006) subscribe more or less explicitly to this thesis and, in Cristina Lafont's (2020, 111) words, search for "institutional shortcuts," such as conferring decisional status on mini-publics. In reality, there is another underexplored research path. Deliberative democrats can argue that having inconclusive spheres is a comparative merit of deliberative democracies. The presence of such spheres confirms that democratic processes are open and committed to living up to citizens' own time. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider this theoretical possibility. To do so, I turn to fallibilism.

RETHINKING INCONCLUSIVENESS

It is commonplace among democratic theorists to accept fallibilism as a metatheoretical basis to justify deliberation as well as other democratic commitments (Biale and Liveriero, 2017; Dahl, 1989; Landemore, 2020; Misak, 2004; Talisse, 2007). Fallibilism, one might say, is built into several deliberative and nondeliberative procedures, such as supermajority requirements, the process of initiatives, constitutional reviews, periodic elections, and a free press (Majone, 1996). One of the main points of deliberation, as Bernard Manin (1987, 357) famously noticed, is exactly to create the conditions for participants to revise and change their biased preferences. Jürgen Habermas (1996, 306) claims that deliberative politics must always regard majority opinion as fallible, subject to revisions if the "minority convinces the majority that [the minority's] views are correct."

In the standard interpretation, fallibilism is understood either as a philosophical view of our inclination to hold false beliefs or as an epistemic recommendation (Haack, 1979). In the first formulation, fallibilism asserts that a cognitive agent can believe that *p* is true even if the justification for the claim is just the best-educated option, leaving, therefore, open the possibility of *p* being false. In the second formulation, a commitment to fallibilism as a view concerning our claims to knowledge requires us to think that human knowledge is imperfect. Several things we commonly take ourselves to know, as Richard Feldman (1981, 267) writes, "are known in this way, so most of what we commonly take ourselves to know can be termed fallible knowledge." On this account, one can be taken to know that *p* is true even if one lacks conclusive evidence to justify believing it (Feldman, 1981).

I think that the two formulations of fallibilism are interconnected. As a philosophical view, it argues that one can know something even if the ontological status of available evidence cannot guarantee the truth of one's belief. In light of this observation, fallibilism as an epistemic recommendation advises us to be ready to revise our beliefs should new evidence become available. At the intersection between these two views, it is possible to see that fallibilism also introduces a diachronic perspective into our experience of forming knowledge claims and of making errors in conditions in which there is a high probability that our knowledge claims are true relative to a class of evidence

or a justification. Specifically, if all available inquiries seem to justify our claims to knowledge, we should be ready to accept that such claims are justified here and now, but such claims are also intrinsically open to corrections and improvements in the future. According to the diachronic standpoint of fallibilism, claims to knowledge and decisions made on the basis of such claims to knowledge are to be seen as elements of a long-term ameliorative project that connects what we know now with what we could possibly know in the near or far-away future.

Seen through these lenses, fallibilism as an epistemic recommendation does not say that claims to knowledge are unreliable. It says that now, a phase in which no one can find a good reason for believing that a claim to knowledge is false, members of a community of knowers should behave as if the claim was fully justified. Given that there might be hidden sources of knowledge, fallibilism as an epistemic recommendation requires the community of knowers to seek out all the evidence they can, provide opportunities to criticize accepted norms, be ready to listen to different sources of knowledge, and therefore demonstrate that, for the moment, there is no reason to reject that claim to knowledge. However, prescriptions for best epistemic practices in the present are just a part of the story. Fallibilism as an epistemic recommendation also entails a stance about the future. That is, even sufficiently justified claims to knowledge are to be understood as temporary equilibria. Such equilibria are liable to be proven mistaken, wrong, or false. There might be new evidence in the future, and we cannot anticipate when we will become aware of such evidence. Hence, fallibilism commits us to think that a properly structured epistemic practice should be understood as an inherently inconclusive inquiry. Even assuming that at a time t , all members of a community of knowers will have attained partial success in incorporating new evidence into their claims to knowledge, such an improvement, cannot erase the most fundamental possibility that, later in the process, other pieces of evidence may give reasons to reject past claims to knowledge.

The future-oriented core of fallibilism has several interconnected implications for deliberative democrats. It implies a thesis about the status of collectively binding decisions. Despite the good justification underlying a collectively binding decision, such a decision should be understood as a transitory settlement in a very long process of continuous perfecting. It also upholds both the inclusion of different perspectives and the creation of revision mechanisms as internal and necessary components of all democratic decision-making processes.

On this view, democratic decisions should be understood as transitory equilibria and therefore as changeable. A decision, however, cannot itself express changeability. To be recognized as a changeable decision, it should be a provisional result in a system in which procedures allow for revisions. Hence, it is reasonable to claim that the thesis concerning the status of a collectively binding decision is strictly connected with the procedural requirements following from the future-oriented core of fallibilism.

This thought goes back at least to the philosophies of Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey and to their idea that the scientific method is replicable in the political domain

of inquiry. “The first step toward finding out,” as Pierce (1877, 13–14) writes, “is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already. Indeed, out of a contrite fallibilism, combined with a high faith in the reality of knowledge, all my philosophy seemed to grow.” In the same vein, “capacities,” as Dewey (1946, 210) puts it, “are limited by the object and tool at hand . . . dependent on habits and interests, that are set by tradition and institutional customs.” Against this backdrop, Anderson (2006, 12) argues that democratic decision-making must have mechanisms to revise and correct its decisions. Anderson (2006, 16) writes that institutions and norms of dissent are “diverse, open, and accessible channels for people from all walks of life, in all social positions”; that “social norms welcome the expression of dissent by all discontented parties”; that institutional procedures “require decision makers to take dissent seriously and hold them accountable if they don’t.” Specifically, Knight and Johnson (2011, 26) claim that democracies should institute procedures to test and amend even the most valued solutions.⁵ In their view, political arguments allow members of a democratic polity to reconsider past substantive decisions (Knight and Johnson, 2011, 162).

One of the overlooked consequences of this view is that feedback mechanisms can have both a democratizing and a legitimizing potential. Another significant consequence is that inconclusive spheres of deliberation can contribute to showing everybody that all democratic decisions can be objects of continuous examination and revision. In the next section, I conclude by discussing more specific implications of this thesis. For now, let me zoom in on the democratizing and legitimizing potential of feedback mechanisms.

Feedback mechanisms can strengthen the legitimacy of democratic decisions and further democratize a democratic society when they include new or marginalized viewpoints in the process of democratic decision-making (Dryzek, 1996). Feedback mechanisms can be legitimizing if two conditions hold true: they are formally recognized as a fundamental component of the democratic decision-making process, and they channel new or marginalized viewpoints into the democratic decision-making process. This is the case of permanent, constitutionally recognized, postdecision minipublics, such as the Indian *gram sabhas*. *Gram sabhas* are permanent local fora in which citizens can debate and amend budgetary allocations in their jurisdiction (Rao and Sanyal, 2010). Feedback mechanisms can also deepen the democratic qualities of democratic societies. Acts of civil disobedience, strikes, and riots have contributed to the multiplication of opportunities for collective public reasoning and give a platform to otherwise-silenced viewpoints. In acknowledging that feedback mechanisms can have both a democratizing and a legitimizing potential, it is important to keep in mind two observations. First, an increase in democratization does not necessarily entail an increase in the legitimacy of democratic decisions. Second, feedback mechanisms have no intrinsic value. They can be weakly legitimizing and weakly democratizing. For example, consultative bodies set up by the European Commission to revise and amend public policies do not engage with the general public, and their output is not binding on the commission.

CONCLUSION: IN PRAISE OF INCONCLUSIVENESS

In the previous section, I touched on the idea that a closer investigation of the future-oriented character of fallibilism can help us reconsider inconclusiveness in deliberative-democratic theory. This investigation would add to the small literature on the durational time of democratic deliberation. As I said in the first section, deliberative democrats tend to think of time mainly as a background variable. Seen through those lenses, deliberative democracies are processes that evolve *in* time. The second section argued that it is also important to research how democratic deliberation, and deliberative democracy more generally, can function *through* time. To do so, critics and supporters of democratic deliberation should account for the difference between pace and length. Democratic deliberation may be slow and inconclusive, but one aspect does not necessarily entail the other. Critics have lamented that democratic deliberation is too slow for high-speed societies. In reality, it is not intrinsically unacceptable that deliberation runs slower than many other mechanisms of decision-making. Much less has been said about the durational time of democratic deliberation. In this case, both critics and supporters of democratic deliberation tend to assume that inconclusiveness is a problem for deliberative democracies. It is against this background that I have incorporated a discussion of the fundamental commitment to fallibilism in debates about time and democratic deliberation. Fallibilism entails a future-oriented perspective that sheds new light upon the status of democratic decisions and procedures. Within this framework, the presence of spheres of inconclusiveness can be a way to attest to the intrinsic revisability of democratic decisions. There are at least two common understandings of inconclusiveness: one refers to something that remains substantially undecided; another refers to a duration that is not predetermined. The present discussion relies upon the latter interpretation. My praise for inconclusiveness should therefore be understood as a celebration of open-endedness in a temporal sense. As I said in the third section, my thesis about inconclusiveness lends support to the idea that feedback mechanisms can be legitimizing and democratizing. I conclude this chapter by sketching another research avenue: a sketch of an argument for an inconclusive and deliberative public sphere.

This argument subscribes to the fundamental deliberative idea of self-government as a critical democratic standard. In such a view, self-government rejects the requirement to blindly defer to political decisions that one cannot support on the basis of reasons (Lafont, 2020, 19). Such a view rules out shortcuts, such as mini-publics (Hendriks, 2015; Kuyper and Wolkenstein, 2019; Setälä, 2017), that are meant as more realizable options than a deliberative public sphere in which citizens can reciprocally justify political decisions. Both critics and supporters of a normative conception of deliberative democracy have paid attention to the spatial boundaries of a properly constructed deliberative public sphere (Dahl, 1989; Stevenson, 2016). The future-oriented character of fallibilism

contributes to better understanding the reason why a properly constructed deliberative public sphere should have an indefinite time horizon.

The distinction between time-centered activities and task-centered activities can help to specify this view. Deliberative democracies would be seen as a combination of time-centered activities and task-centered activities within a task-centered process, that of finding good outcomes according to criteria that, *when laws are enacted and rules are promulgated*, those subjected can accept. The fundamental idea is that the meaning of what is acceptable lies at the intersection between long-established democratic principles and how these principles are rearticulated in a particular moment.

In the sociology of organizations, time-centered activities connect with a time clock. A time-centered activity is an activity that has a clear beginning and end, can be planned with schedules, rules, and procedures, and enables coordination with other activities. In this perspective, time is understood both as a valuable commodity and as a universal standard to compare different activities. Within this framework, the demand for synchronization imposes time pressure external to the task and limits activities that are intrinsically uncertain. Specifically, “instead of waiting for activities to be completed, activities are ordered a priori into time slots for a coordinate execution” (van Wijk, 2016, 145). Task-related activities, such as experimentation, invention, and creation, are open-ended. They, as Clark (1985) writes, have their own time. The amount of time spent to get things done is irrelevant. When an organization is based on time measurement and deadlines, task-related activities, because of the uncertainty of their length, process, and outcome, may be disruptive.

This analogy casts light on how an inconclusive and deliberative public sphere can both contribute to and disrupt different processes of will formation. A single process of will formation is inherently connected to more or less explicit deadlines and immediate needs that, in standard deliberative democratic theory, are channeled through an inclusive and deliberative public sphere. Yet a deliberative public sphere is not only a part of a process that aims at giving form to norms at a specific time. A significant portion of the public sphere runs parallel to such processes and, in some cases, recasts previously held norms and the commitment to fundamental democratic principles as circumstances change. While constitutions set the fundamental principles, the normative idea of an inconclusive and deliberative public sphere supports an evolutionary understanding of the fundamental deliberative idea of self-government as a critical democratic standard. On this view, an inconclusive deliberative public sphere assesses not only specific rules and laws but also transmits fundamental principles and perfects them under new or different social and political conditions.

NOTES

1. As he points out, however, the “still commonplace association of executive power with speed and dispatch seems at least partly ideological given the complexities of modern government” (see the chapter by Scheuerman in this volume).

2. Debates on the justification of institutions for future generations have also included time-sensitive considerations in deliberative-democratic theory. For an assessment of future-focused institutions, see the chapter by González-Ricoy in this volume. On how, and why, future interests may be included in democratic deliberation, see Niemeyer and Jennstål (2016) and González-Ricoy and Rey (2019).
3. Several deliberative democrats draw extensively upon pragmatist psychology and on the political thinking of John Dewey. See, for instance, Habermas (1996). Here I refer to those versions of deliberative democracy that claim to more faithfully represent key pragmatist commitments.
4. Normative democratic theory justifies democracy along two dimensions or combinations of those dimensions. Instrumental arguments compare democratic outcomes to the results of other procedures of political decision-making in light of epistemic or moral considerations. Substantive arguments refer to qualities that are intrinsic to democratic decision-making.
5. Democratic theorists have criticized the transition from epistemic principles—such as fallibilism and other, much more demanding commitments—to a justification of democracy. See Erman and Möller (2016) and Lever (2015).

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CHAPTER 25

INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE AND INSTITUTIONS FOR THE LONG TERM

IÑIGO GONZÁLEZ-RICOY

SOME of our most pressing policy choices involve thorny intertemporal dilemmas. To produce a skilled workforce, mitigate climate change, prepare for disasters, or keep public debt sustainable, governments have to take costly action today (e.g., raise taxes, cut benefits, impose regulations) with benefits arriving in the long run. Given the risks involved, electoral and otherwise, politicians have strong incentives to privilege policies with more immediate returns and to renege prior long-term commitments in such policy areas, rolling over the costs of inaction to future generations (Nordhaus, 1975; Thompson, 2010). An unusually blunt statement from the former director of the Spanish Budgetary Office, Álvaro Nadal, is a case in point. “We should reduce investment in research and development,” he argued to explain cutbacks in research, “as they are no profitable option in the short term” (*Expansión*, 2015).

To address short-termism in public policymaking and to more suitably discharge our duties toward future generations, numerous institutional reforms have been proposed and attempted in recent decades (Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations, 2013; United Nations Secretary-General, 2013; González-Ricoy and Gosseries, 2016a; Boston 2017; Caney, 2019). This chapter focuses on two prominent kinds: insulating and constraining devices (Brunner et al., 2012; Jacobs and Matthews, 2017). Insulating devices, such as independent agencies and watchdogs, aim at shielding policymaking from short-termist pressures by transferring authority away from elected officials. Constraining devices, by contrast, seek to bind elected officials to certain intertemporally appropriate rules from which deviation is costly. They comprise hypothecated taxes, trust funds, and constitutional principles of intergenerational fairness, which many countries have adopted and courts in the Philippines, Chile, or the Netherlands have enforced.

Insofar as these and similar institutions can be intentionally designed, questions about their effectiveness and legitimacy arise, which much recent normative research has tackled and this chapter inspects. The first section discusses sufficientarian, egalitarian, and prioritarian theories of our duties toward future generations and when a focus on the short term in public policymaking may infringe them. The second section surveys future-beneficial and future-focused institutions and, among these, constraining and insulating devices. The third section presents two criteria to assess such devices: their effectiveness to address the epistemic, motivational, and institutional sources of short-termism and their legitimacy in allocating power, intra- and intergenerationally. The fourth section discusses how well constraining and insulating devices fare as to these criteria. Although constraining devices are generally better equipped to satisfy them, I argue, insulating devices may be suitably designed to address some of their shortcomings. The fifth section concludes by discussing some areas for future research.

WRONGFUL SHORT-TERMISM AND INTERGENERATIONAL JUSTICE

Many of our policy choices today will importantly affect future generations—a category that comprises two distinct groups: those who, like children, are not yet citizens and those who are not yet born. Some policy choices, such as the amount of public debt we accumulate or how much we invest in early education, will affect the former. Some others, like nuclear waste management or climate change policies, will have much longer life spans, also affecting generations yet unborn. Both kinds of policy choices, however, involve trade-offs between immediate and future benefits, and are likewise liable to short-termist pressures in public policymaking, for elected officials have strong incentives to privilege policies with payoffs arriving before the next election and to renege prior far-sighted commitments that may be optimal in the long term yet not in the short run. No wonder many, like Kevin Rudd, former prime minister of Australia, refer to short-termism as “the virus, the disease, some would say the epidemic [that] threatens [our] long-term future” (Gallery and Gallery, 2009, 275).

Yet privileging the short term need not always be wrongful. If, for example, we can safely expect future generations to be wealthier than us, then passing greater financial burdens on to them may be justified due to diminishing marginal utility or to a distributive principle that puts the worst-off first (Price, 2003). And discounting the value of future benefits in public policymaking may also be permissible to account for the profitable investment opportunities that are foregone (Broome, 1994).

What, then, makes short-termism wrongful? First, there are cases in which an excessive focus on the short run may yield an inefficient allocation of burdens and benefits across time and generations. For example, Heckman et al. (2010) suggest that investing

\$1 on preschool education targeted at disadvantaged African American youth yields \$12.2 in long-term social gains, after discounting such gains at 5 percent per annum. And the immediate imposition of a carbon tax of \$27 per ton, rising to \$90 per ton by 2050, would pay for itself over the long run in avoided losses to GDP, after discounting future benefits at 4 percent per annum, Nordhaus (2008) argues. Failing to act in these cases because short-term gains are privileged brings about, other things equal, inefficient outcomes.

A second kind of wrongful short-termism, which often overlaps with the first, occurs when present policies infringe on our duties toward future generations, which failing to invest in early education or leaving climate change unabated, for example, would *prima facie* do. We need, however, a full normative account of such duties. Ascertaining when exactly, and to what extent, privileging present interests over future ones is wrongful in this second sense will depend on the particular obligations we have toward future generations.

Theories of Intergenerational Justice

Theories of intergenerational justice address our duties to both past and future generations. We here focus on the latter, whose content has prompted two kinds of questions. One, which we sidestep here, is whether *anything* is owed to individuals who do not yet exist, whose identity is contingent on our present decisions, and with whom cooperation is unfeasible. Assume, however, that responses to these challenges are successful (for overviews, see Kumar, 2018; Meijers, 2018; Caney, 2018). A second, more relevant question for the issue at hand is *what* is owed, rather than whether anything is owed, to future generations. We need to ask, then, what the content of our duties to future generations is. This is a question that sufficientarian, egalitarian, and prioritarian theories approach differently.

Start with intergenerational sufficientarianism, according to which the duty each generation has toward subsequent generations is that of leaving conditions that allow a minimum threshold of living (Meyer and Roser, 2009; Gosseries, 2017). The view, which is most famously expressed by the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, 43), has various distinctive features. One is that our duty to leave enough for the future is largely independent from what we may end up having as a result of choice and circumstance, including what we inherit from past generations.¹ Another is that what counts as enough is typically defined, on this view, by reference to an objective standard, like basic needs or capabilities, rather than to future generations' preferences—whose content is harder to foresee, especially as to distant generations, and more contingent on prior generations' own preferences through formal and informal education (Ekeli, 2007; Gosseries, 2017).

One complication is how to define, and where to set, the relevant threshold. Rawls's (1999, 159) "institutional sufficientarianism," for example, holds that we have a duty to bequeath the conditions "needed to establish and to preserve a just basic structure over time." Many, however, favor less taxing (and more specific) definitions of the threshold, like avoiding deprivation or meeting basic needs. But most would agree that, albeit hard to specify, sufficiency is a necessary element of what we owe to future generations. Is it also enough, however? Some think not (Casal, 2007; Caney, 2018). Suppose we could greatly benefit later cohorts above the threshold or redress gross intergenerational inequalities at little or no cost to ourselves. It seems clear that we would then have a duty to do so, and that privileging the short term instead would be wrongful. A second, more demanding view involves, thus, a requirement to *equalize* generations by benefiting those who are worse off. This view comes in roughly two forms: relational and distributive.

Relational egalitarianism holds that what we should seek to equalize is not how benefits are distributed across generations but how generations relate to one another, such that all generations be treated as equals by preceding cohorts and relations of exploitation (Liberto, 2014) or domination (Katz, 2017) be avoided. The view may be apt for relations among overlapping generations (Bidadanure, 2016a). But it is less so, many argue, for intergenerational relations beyond the overlap (Caney, 2018). The kind of exploitative or dominating relations this view seeks to root out typically requires interaction between a perpetrator and a victim, which is only possible among contemporaries. Failing to abate climate change due to an excessive focus on the short term may, then, wrong future people. But it is unclear whether it also involves exploiting or dominating them.

Distributive egalitarianism, by contrast, seeks to equalize the allocation of morally relevant benefits—welfare, resources, or capabilities, to name some prominent candidates of the metric that, according to different proponents of this view, we should use primarily. On a strict variant, intergenerational egalitarianism is indifferent to the absolute level of benefits members of each generation enjoy. It is thus liable to the so-called leveling-down objection: it could recommend, if growing prosperity is expected, that better-off generations' position be worsened for the sake of equality, whose value is deemed intrinsic.

On a prioritarian variant, by contrast, what matters is not equality per se but benefitting those who are worst off (Parfit, 1997). And doing so matters more the worse off the worst-off are. Prioritarianism has, in brief, an intrinsic tendency toward equality. Between two cohorts whose prospects are uneven, it favors that the position of the worse-off cohort be enhanced—which has led some, like Fleurbaey (2015), to argue that prioritarianism and strict egalitarianism largely overlap as to their practical recommendations. But it does not value equality as such and thus avoids the leveling-down objection.

When applied to nonoverlapping generations, however, egalitarianism is liable to important concerns (Meyer and Roser, 2009; Casal, 2019). First, to justify it, we cannot resort to many of the instrumental reasons to denounce inequality among

contemporaries, such as its effects on crime, distrust, physical and mental illness, teenage pregnancy, drug use, obesity, or pollution—effects that inequality among distant cohorts may not yield. Nor can we resort to intrinsic condemnations of inequality, which may not be objectionable across distant cohorts. Second, pursuing intergenerational equality (or priority) across distant generations would impose overwhelming computational burdens. How can we ascertain what would make future people, whose preferences and conditions are likely to differ radically from ours, neither worse off nor better off than us? Finally, intergenerational equality would be awfully hard to realize, given the vast institutional apparatus needed to achieve it and the inescapable power asymmetry between present and later generations.

Egalitarianism is, in brief, apt to define our duties toward younger cohorts but not toward those yet to come, for which sufficientarianism is better suited. For example, given that sufficientarianism is concerned with the absolute position of future generations, it can be justified with no reference to the intrinsic or instrumental worth of their position relative to that of past or subsequent cohorts. And it is also informationally less exacting and easier to realize politically, given that it is merely concerned with avoiding that anyone falls below certain minimal threshold—one that, in addition, is defined in preference-insensitive terms, like avoiding deprivation or protecting basic needs.

When, and to what extent, short-termism in policymaking is wrongful will hinge, then, on two things. The first is the time horizon of the relevant policy choice: whether it is likely to only affect those who, like children, are not yet citizens, to whom equality is owed, or will also affect those who are not yet born, to whom sufficiency is owed. The second is whether privileging the short term would infringe the duties we may then have for that particular policy choice.

FUTURE-BENEFICIAL AND FUTURE-FOCUSED INSTITUTIONS

Let us now consider institutional responses to wrongful short-termism. It is commonplace to view such responses as a means to correct democracies' built-in bias toward the present. On a popular view, shared by scholars and citizens alike, electoral cycles, voters' myopia, and incumbents' desire to remain in office inexorably yield policies that privilege immediate benefits over future payoffs (Nordhaus, 1975; Thompson, 2010). Yet, although electoral pressures toward the short term are no doubt daunting, the record of existing democracies offers a more complicated picture. Democratic governments display an ample range of intertemporal choices: they vary greatly as to how much public debt they amass, how much they invest in education, or how well they preserve their forests (Jacobs, 2011; MacKenzie, 2018). Given that you cannot explain a variable with a constant, as the saying goes, we should

probably ask, then, not what can be done to mitigate democracy's short-termism, but what makes some democracies less prone to short-termism and more caring about the future than others.

One way to approach this question is to separate out future-focused from future-beneficial institutional setups (González-Ricoy and Gosseries, 2016b). Future-focused institutions, like specialized agencies and budgetary rules, have promoting intertemporally appropriate policies as their main purpose. Future-beneficial institutions, by contrast, do so as a byproduct of pursuing other goals. I will here zoom in on the former, which have dominated recent debates, especially among normative theorists (Tremmel, 2006; Thompson, 2010; Gardiner, 2014; Caney, 2016; Smith, 2019; John and MacAskill, forthcoming). But there is a growing literature on how institutions whose chief aim is not to promote farsighted policies, like proportional electoral rules (Lindvall, 2017; Finnegan, 2019), government transparency (Aguiar et al., 2019), institutional capacity (Jacobs, 2011), and low corruption (Garri, 2010), crucially contribute to this end. Given that the diversity of sources of short-termism (see next section) invites a diversity of institutional responses, and that future-beneficial institutions may be easier to adopt, as they can be justified on independent grounds, one can only hope that research on future-beneficial institutions will grow further.

Future-focused institutions, on which the rest of the chapter will focus, seek to extend the temporal gaze of policymaking not as a side effect of pursuing other purposes but as their main or even sole purpose. They abound, comprising ombudspersons for future generations, foresight practices, youth quotas, budgetary rules, deliberative mini-publics, intergenerational trust funds, climate banks, and parliamentary committees, to mention some. For tractability, I here inspect two types that have elicited much recent debate: insulating and constraining devices (Brunner et al., 2012; Jacobs and Matthews, 2017; Boston, 2017, 186 ff.).

Insulating Devices

Insulating devices aim at extending the temporal gaze of policy choices by shielding them from short-termist pressures. Commitment theorists, for example, have long argued that long-term policy commitments may be easier to adopt, harder to renege, and more credible if (some) policymaking authority is transferred away to bodies whose members are not elected by citizens, nor directed by elected officials, and thus less liable to electoral pressures (Majone, 1996). Similarly, some democratic theorists have argued that delegation to unelected bodies that are appointed by elected officials yet do not serve at their pleasure may avoid that policymaking be dominated by electoral motives (Pettit, 2012, ch. 4).

Depending on their authority, insulating devices can take the form of an agency or a watchdog (Brunner et al., 2012). Agencies wield final authority to enact certain policies on the government's behalf (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2002). Independent central banks and constitutional courts are clear examples. But some have suggested that an

energy agency tasked with meeting an emission target by, for example, setting a carbon tax could play an analogous role (Helm et al., 2003).

Watchdogs, by contrast, are bodies whose authority is restricted to advising and monitoring the government on certain areas. Independent offices for future generations, such as those established in 2001 in Israel, in 2008 in Hungary, and in 2016 in Wales, are illustrative (Boston, 2017; Smith, 2019). They typically lack legislative or executive authority, though they may also wield some quasi-governing powers. For example, the Israeli Commissioner for Future Generations, which was discontinued after one term, had authority to delay legislation that could potentially harm future generations (Shoham and Lamay, 2006). And the Hungarian Commissioner for Future Generations, whose primary task was to safeguard the constitutional right to a healthy environment for future generations, could suspend administrative orders and seek action from the Constitutional Court until its status was downgraded in 2012.

This is just one possible way of insulating policymaking—one that seeks to do so by screening out those who, like elected officials, are deemed more prone to short-termism. Alternatively, policymaking may be insulated by screening in or upgrading the power of those who presumably are future-friendlier, as Dobson (1996) and Bidadanure (2016b) have suggested, respectively, as to members of environmental associations and to the youth. On Dobson's much-discussed proposal, seats in parliament are reserved for representatives of future generations, who are elected among and by environmental activists. On Bidadanure's proposal, youth quotas are introduced in parliament (see also van Parijs, 1998, and Karnein and Roser, 2015, for detailed discussion).

Constraining Devices

Instead of transferring authority away from elected officials, as insulating devices do, constraining devices seek to bind elected officials to intergenerationally appropriate rules from which deviation is costly.

Constitutionalizing norms of intergenerational fairness, which many countries have done in recent decades, often coupled with requirements to foster sustainable development and with fiscal rules, is one means to this end (May and Daly, 2015; González-Ricoy and Rey, 2019). The basic idea is that constitutional provisions enjoy normative priority over ordinary statutes, can only be amended by means that are costlier than ordinary lawmaking procedures, like qualified majority requirements, and are often enforceable by courts, which may review legislative and administrative actions deviating from their content, as courts in the Philippines, Chile, and the Netherlands and have done in recent decades.² So constitutionalization makes it harder for present and future incumbents to deviate from the provisions' content.

Budgetary rules, such as hypothecated taxes and trust funds, may perform a similar task at the statutory level (Patashnik, 2000; Brunner et al., 2012), as they require that certain revenues be earmarked for a predeclared public policy purpose, like investing

in early education or financing green technology. Given that their goals are also typically broken down into near-term targets that make deviations easy to detect, often provoking media and public outrage when they occur, they create strong incentives for elected officials not to deviate from their content.

We must finally note that, notwithstanding their disparities, neither insulating devices nor constraining devices seek to alter individuals' motivations, as alternative devices do—exogenously, for example, through education (Zwarthoed, 2015), or endogenously, through deliberation (MacKenzie, 2018). Insulating and constraining devices, by contrast, do not aim to *directly* change individuals' motivations, though they may indirectly have this effect, as we will see later.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Next consider two normative criteria to assess insulating and constraining devices: their effectiveness to cope with the various sources of wrongful short-termism and their legitimacy in allocating power, intra- and intergenerationally.

Effectiveness

The chief criterion to assess future-focused institutions is, of course, how effective they are at keeping wrongful short-termism at bay, and doing it with as low opportunity costs as possible and with the ability to remain in operation over time. We need to first know, then, what drives policymaking toward the short term. One way to approach this is to link the sources of short-termism to different types of political actors, like voters, politicians, special interest groups, and (the powerlessness of) future generations (MacKenzie, 2016). Another, which I here lean on, is to distinguish sources of short-termism according to whether they are of a motivational, epistemic, or institutional nature (González-Ricoy and Gosseries, 2016b; Boston, 2017).

Motivational determinants include voters' impatience and incumbents' desire to remain in office. Coupled with electoral competition, they offer a clear prediction of policy myopia. As noted earlier, if voters have a preference for immediate benefits, then incumbents seeking reelection have strong incentives to privilege policies yielding such benefits—"myopic policies for myopic voters," as Edward Tufte (1978, 143) noted. It is important to distinguish, however, pure time preference, which refers to a preference for immediate utility over delayed utility and is purely motivational, from time discounting, which refers to a preference for immediate consequences irrespective of the reason to value future consequences less, some of which may not be motivational (Frederick et al., 2002). For example, Frederick (2003) finds that individuals' inclination to value future lives less than present lives largely results from uncertainty about whether future people

will exist or whether long-term investments will benefit them, rather than from an intergenerational time preference. Once uncertainty is controlled for, individuals no longer value future generations less.

Epistemic determinants, on the other hand, include ignorance, various cognitive biases, and uncertainty. To illustrate, take climate policies. Voters and policymakers may discriminate against long-term benefits of mitigation policies, to start, if they ignore the harmful long-term effects that unabated climate change may yield. They may also do so if they happen to underestimate the likelihood of future disasters or to disdain abstract future harms whose victims are unidentifiable (Irving, 2009). And they may likewise do so if they are uncertain about who, and how many, will live in the future; about the world they will inhabit, including their technology to adapt to climate change; and about the likelihood of present policies yielding the promised long-term benefits, given the causal complexity involved (Jacobs and Matthews, 2017; van der Steen and van Twist, this volume).

Finally, consider institutional determinants. Suitably motivated and informed policymakers may still lack the institutional ability to produce long-term policy outcomes. For example, existing institutions may be too weak (Jacobs, 2011) or corrupt (Garri, 2010). And policymakers may also be liable to collective action problems (Gardiner, 2011; Brunner et al., 2012; Goetz, 2014). These may be synchronic, such as when taking long-term climate action requires that other polities or private actors take it, too, and a temptation to free-ride on others' efforts exists. And they may be diachronic, such as when long-term action requires continued investment, which future incumbents need to uphold but may be tempted, for ideological or electoral reasons, to renege.

In addition, how effective future-focused institutions are also hangs on their opportunity costs and on their ability to remain in operation over time. Opportunity costs comprise both foregone opportunities to invest in alternative institutions and, given that citizens' attention is scarce, cognitive opportunity costs. Three implications follow. First, though the causes of short-termism are diverse, such that tackling them will require a diversity of responses, there is always a cost in establishing a new institution. Parsimony matters. It also entails that if one institution (or cluster of institutions) is computationally less taxing than some alternative, then a *pro tanto* reason to adopt the former exists. It finally entails that institutions should not be assessed in isolation. We should also consider how a new device affects the existing institutional ecology, including its potential crowding-out effects.

The ability to remain in operation over time is also important, as long-term investments often need to be sustained over long stretches of time, cutting across successive electoral cycles (Jacobs, 2011; Goetz, 2014; Caney, 2016). Further, given that sunk costs may be incurred when long-term investments are made, future-focused institutions that are easy to undo because their parliamentary support is fragile or can be discontinued by simple majority, and whose prospects to remain in operation are small, may be less effective than establishing no such institution in the first place.

Procedural Legitimacy

Consider now legitimacy criteria to assess future-focused institutions, which can be empirical and normative, substantive and procedural, and intra- and intergenerational. I here focus on normative and procedural criteria, both intra- and intergenerational.

Normative legitimacy has traditionally been conceived of as the right to rule, as the right that legitimate states have to issue and coercively enforce legal directives. What this view arguably entails is that institutions with no coercive authority, like merely advisory bodies, are largely immune to legitimacy assessments (Beckman and Uggla, 2016). But this is too narrow a view. Coercion surely sets the bar of legitimacy higher. Yet noncoercive institutions (think, for example, of a watchdog that acts *ultra vires* or grossly misuses public funds) are also liable to legitimacy concerns. What is at stake when we make legitimacy assessments is the broader issue of whether an institution merits our moral reason-based support (Adams, 2018; Buchanan, 2018).

Two clusters of conditions are relevant to assess whether future-focused institutions merit such support. Substantive conditions hang on their outcomes and largely overlap with the effectiveness conditions discussed earlier. Procedural conditions, on which I here focus, hang on *how* such outcomes are brought about. They hang, in brief, on their ability to mitigate short-termism without infringing principles of procedural fairness—like those of political equality, democratic control, and sovereignty—in allocating power.

Intragenerationally applied, these principles are straightforward. They require that no individual or group be granted more power than other contemporaries to decide on the future. They also require that decision makers be authorized by and accountable to the relevant constituency. And they finally require that, in areas in which no duty toward future generations exists, because their interests are likely to be unaffected, such interests be ignored. For the opposite would amount to the subjection of present generations by future cohorts.

Intergenerationally applied, principles of procedural legitimacy are less clear. Take democratic control first. Though political institutions, to be legitimate, typically require authorization by and/or accountability to those whose interests are potentially affected, unborn generations and children below a certain age are unable, for obvious reasons, to do this. But, just as safeguarding the interests of an unconscious patient could replace the need for informed consent to render a medical intervention legitimate, promoting future interests in policymaking, which is the very purpose of future-focused institutions, could replace the need for authorization and accountability to render such institutions legitimate (González-Ricoy and Gosseries, 2016b, 18). How fittingly they represent and safeguard such interests will crucially inform, then, how legitimate such institutions are.³

What political equality and sovereignty mean intergenerationally is also moot. A classic concern, which Jefferson and Condorcet already flagged, is that some institutions unevenly allocate power across generations (Holmes, 1988; Otsuka, 2003; Gosseries,

2016). Constitutions in particular, whose content is hard to amend, could thwart future generations' ability to live under laws of their own choosing. Some, however, have resisted this idea by denying that extragenerational jurisdiction is possible. For example, Beckman argues, "Only the future can enforce the law of the future. Thus, no law ever applies to the future unless affirmed by future people themselves" (2013, 781).

One response is that, though enforcement across nonoverlapping generations is impossible, each generation will always have to agree with the rest in the overlap to amend the constitution. A two-thirds majority requirement, for example, will then make it hard for each single generation to amend the constitution. And, given that the shift from one overlap to the next is continuous, we are always in an overlap context (Gosseries, 2016, 105). Alternatively, we could accept that jurisdiction beyond the overlap is possible. Suppose that a simple majority of all generations alive at some point wished to amend the constitution without entirely replacing it. It would be contentious to say that a two-thirds majority requirement does not restrict their ability to do so (compared to the simple majority required by ordinary lawmaking) because they could pass the amendment by extraconstitutional means or by replacing the entire constitution. This would amount to saying that an intrusive mother-in-law is innocuous because you could always get rid of her by divorcing your wife (whom you wish to stay married to). By the same token, in entrenching some laws against change, the founding generations can legally threaten subsequent generations' sovereignty because, in so doing, they can place the latter before this kind of tradeoffs.

ASSESSING FUTURE-FOCUSED INSTITUTIONS

We are now ready to discuss the effectiveness and legitimacy of insulating and constraining devices. I do not take up the gargantuan task of inspecting each and every criterion set out in the previous section for every instance of each device. Bearing in mind that institutional design is highly contingent on each country's institutional ecology, I rather discuss their main potential merits and weaknesses as to their effectiveness and legitimacy.

Before starting off, it is important to mention two important ways in which insulating and constraining devices may similarly contribute to keeping short-termist pressures at bay. First, both devices may overcome *collective action problems* by enabling credible commitment (Brunner et al., 2012). Take climate change policy. By transferring some authority over climate policy to an office at arm's length from government, or by earmarking certain tax for investment in clean technology, for example, governments may credibly signal that they are "on board" with the long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In so doing, they may induce third parties, like companies and investors, to likewise reduce their emissions, on the assumption that it will be costly for present and future incumbents to renege this commitment and to free ride on their efforts (Helm et al., 2003).

Second, constraining and insulating devices may also importantly tackle citizens' *short-termist motivations* as well as their *unawareness* and *cognitive biases* by shaping public opinion. For example, by establishing independent offices for future generations, in particular if they have some bite, or by granting principles of intergenerational fairness constitutional status, governments can credibly signal to the public how important intergenerational matters are, inducing citizens to update their values and beliefs on such matters, as the literature on the expressive effects of the law suggests (e.g., McAdams, 2015).

It is also worth noting, before discussing legitimacy considerations, that there is no reason why the burden of proof should fall on future-focused institutions. Existing institutions are also liable to legitimacy concerns, as some of our present policies may importantly thwart future generations' interests, infringing our duties toward them (Dobson, 1996; O'Neill, 2001; Beckman, 2013). Future-focused institutions need justification no less than the status quo. Thus, in examining whether certain a device merits our moral reason-based support, we must compare it not just to alternative devices (insulating, constraining, or otherwise) but also to existing institutions.

Insulating Devices

Insulating devices are often seen as trading procedural legitimacy for effectiveness. In transferring authority away from officials that are liable to short-termist electoral pressures, they seem to aptly extend policy choices' temporal gaze. Yet this comes at a cost, given that, in so doing, they appear to deviate importantly from principles of accountability and political equality. This picture, however, is simplistic. On closer inspection, numerous limitations as to their effectiveness arise. And steps may also be taken to mitigate some of the legitimacy problems they raise.

Start with effectiveness. Insulating devices aim, to repeat, at sheltering policymaking from short-termist pressures, such as electoral cycles. They do so by delegating authority to officials who are neither directly elected by the people, nor accountable to them, and can thus more easily avoid blame for risky, far-sighted policy choices. This is true of delegation to independent agencies and watchdogs no less than of Dobson's proposal to reserve seats in parliament for representatives of future generations: the latter would also be shielded from short-termist pressures from the electorate at large, as they would be elected among and by members of environmentalist associations, on the assumption that these are more aptly motivated than other citizens.

Yet mere independence need not entail willingness to adopt more intertemporally balanced policies. Absent further conditions, like those related to the specific mandate that binds insulated officials, which we discuss later, why should we assume that they will be future-friendlier than elected ones? A plausible response is that independent bodies typically staff trained specialists, whose expertise exceeds that of elected officials, and that parliamentary representatives on Dobson's proposal would be elected among future-friendlier citizens. Expertise, however, says nothing about officials' particular

goals. For example, the motivations and goals of central bankers (Adolph, 2013) and judges (Schauer, 1999), to name two cases of insulation from electoral pressures, seem not to be any less partisan than those of ordinary citizens. With regard to Dobson's proposal, on the other hand, one may ask why environmentalists should be assumed to be less prone to short-termism than others, not just as to environmental lawmaking but also as to the range of areas on which members of parliament legislate. After all, other citizens may be active on other intertemporally relevant fronts, like education or poverty, out of concern for future generations (González-Ricoy and Gosseries, 2016b).

As to their ability to tackle the epistemic sources of short-termism, insulating devices yield mixed results. Expert input is no doubt crucial to tackle various epistemic determinants (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2002). It may, for example, increase public awareness of overlooked long-term issues. And it may likewise counter citizens' inclination to disdain future harms by offering reliable information and vivid examples, and yield better informed and less partisan policymaking on long-term issues. Insulation also allows for more flexibility than constraining devices to react to changing circumstances and to integrate new information about, for example, climate change damages or macroeconomic trends (Brunner et al., 2012). Given that changes in circumstances and information are often likelier the longer the time horizon of the relevant policy choice and, thus, the more uncertainty involved (see, however, van der Steen and van Twist, this volume), insulating devices are particularly well suited for policy choices whose effects extend over very long stretches of time.

Yet, when authority is transferred away to independent bodies, insulation may also increase, rather than mitigate, uncertainty about whether the desired long-term policy outcomes will arrive. Insulating certain policy choices from electoral pressures does little to constrain policymakers' room for maneuver. What is more, it also removes one potential tool to sanction them if they deviate from prior long-term commitments: the threat of electoral penalty. Indeed, in various survey experiments, Jacobs and Matthews (2017) find that insulating devices, unlike constraining devices, which we discuss later, yield no observable effect on support for long-term investments, as they do little to reduce the perceived political uncertainty about whether such investments will deliver the promised outcomes. Independent bodies, Jacobs and Matthews argue, place formidable computational demands on citizens, who typically ignore the motives of the officials that populate them and are thus reluctant to support them. This, in turn, raises concerns about the computational opportunity costs that such devices impose, given the demands to gather information about insulated officials' ends they impose on citizens, as well as about their ability to secure ample support.

Insulating devices encounter, thus, various hurdles to remain in operation over time, as the Israeli and the Hungarian offices for future generations, which lasted just one term before they were respectively discontinued and downgraded, can attest (Smith, 2019). One hurdle is, to repeat, citizens' hesitation to support institutions whose monitoring is informationally taxing. (Shoham and Lamay [2006] also mention financial costs as one of the reasons why the Israeli office was suspended.) A second hurdle is that insulating devices are typically established by statute and can thus be easily discontinued. A

third is that the primary constituency insulating devices seek to represent, minors and unborn generations, is powerless (Boston, 2017, 331). Some have argued, however, that embedding systematic participation from civil society associations in their operation may increase public support from present constituencies, rendering them less fragile if future incumbents attempt to discontinue them (Smith, 2019).

Next consider procedural legitimacy concerns, starting with intergenerational ones. Given that insulating devices are easy to discontinue by future cohorts, they cause little trouble from the standpoint of generational sovereignty. But the concerns about their effectiveness that we have just discussed translate, absent further details about their powers and mandate, into serious intergenerational legitimacy concerns. As discussed in the previous section, given that authorization by and accountability to future generations is not possible, the risk that insulated officials use their independence to advance interests other than those of future individuals, yielding long-term outcomes that fail to benefit or may even harm them, is very real.

In addition, given that insulated officials are neither authorized by nor accountable to present citizens, they are also liable to *intragenerational* concerns. Some have argued that, when insulating devices are established in response to political dysfunctions, like democracies' tendency to privilege the short term, and are subject to revocation by elected legislatures, they need not raise serious intragenerational legitimacy concerns (Pettit, 2012; Smith, 2019). Others are more skeptical. In the particular case of bodies whose purpose is to advance the interests of future people, there is a risk over and above the general legitimacy concern that nonelected institutions raise (Waldron, 1999). The risk, Karnein (2016, 87) argues, is that, absent authorization/accountability, insulated officials "may find speaking in the name of future generations a convenient and self-righteous way to avoid their duties to contemporaries, by putting the alleged interests of future generations first." They may, for example, deviate funds that could be profitably used for present purposes and whose diversion is harder to detect, given that their return is expected years or decades hence (Garri, 2010).

How serious legitimacy concerns stemming from the lack of authorization and accountability are depends, however, on insulating devices' particular design. One aspect is the specific powers insulated officials are entrusted with, which can range from merely advising and monitoring governmental action to wielding full authority to enact policy. Another is the purview of such authority, which may encompass issues that are more or less politically contested and more or less technical. For example, courts have generally been reluctant to enforce constitutional norms of environmental safety, deferring action to legislatures instead, because, they have often argued, environmental decisions raise complex trade-offs and have formidable distributive effects that elected institutions are more legitimate to assess (May and Daly, 2015). A third factor is the content of the mandate by which insulated officials are bound. Narrowly defined goals and means to pursue them, which a sufficientarian view of our intergenerational duties would recommend, alongside exacting monitoring mechanisms and parliamentary control over their budget and titular, may importantly reduce insulated officials' room for maneuver (Helm et al., 2003; Brunner et al., 2012; González-Ricoy and Rey, 2019). And they may

likewise reduce political uncertainty about long-term goals being delivered, hence mitigating intergenerational legitimacy concerns.

Note, however, that many of these factors plot, as it were, against the very rationale behind insulating devices. If, for example, we submit insulated officials to a tight mandate and exacting monitoring by elected officials, we then also reduce their flexibility to cope with changing information and their immunity from electoral pressures. Also note that, though these factors may importantly mitigate legitimacy concerns, absent citizens' authorization and accountability, such concerns are unlikely to entirely go away. Finally, note that these concerns are particularly intractable as to Dobson's proposal. For one thing, given that parliamentary representatives of future generations would have open-ended lawmaking authority, no mandate of this kind could mitigate concerns about their effectiveness and intergenerational legitimacy. For another, given that they would be elected by and solely accountable to other environmentalists, excluding other citizens, the intragenerational legitimacy concerns the proposal raises are probably insurmountable.

Constraining Devices

Constraining devices elude some of the hurdles insulating devices face as to their effectiveness and legitimacy. But they encounter new ones, which I here discuss.

Take motivational sources of short-termism first. Instead of delegating authority to nonelected officials, as insulating devices do, constraining devices seek to bind elected officials to intergenerationally apt rules from which deviation is costly. In so doing, they avoid leaning on a dubious inference from independence from electoral pressures to willingness to adopt intergenerationally fairer policies. Means to motivate officials to abide by such rules can take two forms. When granted constitutional status, rules enjoy normative priority over ordinary statutes, can only be amended by cumbersome means, and are often enforceable by courts, which may review, and sometimes revoke, statutes and administrative actions deviating from the rules' content. Elected officials have reason, then, to comply with the rules, lest their actions be rendered unconstitutional by a court and accordingly turned down, and cannot easily change them.

When constraining rules are adopted as statutory laws, none of these means are available. Given that they lack normative priority, that they can be changed by simple majority, and that they cannot be enforced through judicial review, some doubt whether they can have much effect on elected officials' opportunistic or electoral temptations. But much depends on how they are designed. If long-term rules are clear, as when they require that certain revenue be earmarked for some predefined purpose, and are broken down into near-term targets, then deviation may be easy to detect, triggering media outrage and loss of public support when it occurs (Patashnik, 2000; Jacobs and Matthews, 2017). If, in addition, they are designed to benefit present cohorts by, for example, reserving the proceeds of emission trading for redistribution to the poorest households,

then public long-term support is likely to increase, and so they are the costs of diversion (Brunner et al., 2012).

How effectively constraining devices address the epistemic sources of short-termism also hinges on their design. On the one hand, in setting out clear rules and shielding them from officials' discretion, constraining devices are better equipped than insulating devices to mitigate uncertainty about whether the promised long-term payoffs will arrive (Jacobs and Matthews, 2017). On the other, however, they are also less flexible to cope with new information, which may result in less effective policies. Making rules easier to adapt to new conditions would create loopholes for opportunistic deviations, and attempting to foresee all future contingencies would be just impossible. But, serious though this problem is in areas that are liable to severe uncertainty and to recurrent information updates, like climate change abatement, certainty and flexibility need not be irreconcilable. Constraining rules may be adjusted to context-dependent factors whose content does not depend on governments. For example, rules setting the price or permissible quantity of greenhouse gas emissions may be able to adapt to new circumstances without creating loopholes for opportunistic deviation, Brunner et al. (2012) argue, if we make them contingent on predefined parameters, like new insights in climate science or international climate agreements, that are independent from elected officials and hard to manipulate.

Constraining devices' ability to address political sources of short-termism, on the other hand, crucially depends on their prospects to remain in operation over time. For whether they successfully contribute to overcoming synchronic collective action problems, inducing public and private agents to coordinate around the long-term goals set by a new rule, importantly depends on whether such agents expect that the rule will not be easily changed or ignored by future incumbents. This, in turn, depends both on their legal status and their design. Constitutional rules are typically hard to amend, whereas simple majorities are often enough to change statutory law. But, as we have seen, various factors can render the latter more resilient to change. First, statutory rules may generate long-term public support if they are designed to benefit not just future constituencies but also present ones. They may also be harder to undo if they are designed to make officials' attempts to change them easy to detect, as hypothecated taxes and trust funds aptly do. And, insofar as they make the outcomes of long-term investments less uncertain, they may likewise increase their public support, as Jacobs and Matthews (2017) argue.

Finally, consider legitimacy concerns. Insofar as constraining devices are self-imposed by parliaments, they raise few intragenerational difficulties. When they are granted constitutional status, however, they raise a well-known intergenerational concern (Otsuka, 2003; Gosseries, 2016; Tremmel, 2019). Given that future generations will have a hard time amending their content should they want to do so, constitutionalizing constraining rules may end up imposing the will of the founding generations on subsequent ones, threatening the ability of the latter to live under laws of their own choosing. Briefly consider some responses to this concern (for more detailed discussion, see

González-Ricoy, 2016). One is that the concern only arises when constitutional norms seek to track and safeguard future *preferences*. Given that these are likely to evolve over time and across cohorts, the norms' content, albeit well intended, may end up unfittingly reflecting them. The concern largely disappears, on this view, when constitutional rules are limited to safeguarding future people's *basic needs*, which are unlikely to change over time, as constraining devices on a sufficientarian view seek to do (Ekeli, 2007).

In addition, how constraining devices are formulated and adopted may also mitigate the generational sovereignty concern. First, if constitutional provisions, unlike statutory rules, are formulated abstractly, as general principles rather than specific rules, future cohorts may be able to adjust their understanding to fit an evolving society, as generational change occurs and circumstances vary (Ferrerres, 2000; Waluchow, 2007). Second, if the relevant provisions are adopted under conditions that are normatively more demanding than ordinary lawmaking conditions—if, say, they are adopted after a process of consultation and deliberation among parties, associations, and citizens and they reach ample, bipartisan support—difficulty to amend them may safeguard, rather than constrain, citizens' will from the risk that elected officials may easily renege them (Ackerman, 1991). Although none of these responses is likely to make the intergenerational concern entirely go away, for future generations would be unable to easily amend the rules all the same, they may importantly mitigate it.

CONCLUSION

Normative theorists and social scientists studying intergenerational politics have profitably teamed up in recent years. They have inspected, among other things, our duties toward future generations, the drivers of political short-termism that hinder that such duties be discharged in public policymaking, and the conditions to render institutional responses to short-termism effective and legitimate. This chapter has surveyed recent normative research on these issues, focusing on two prominent responses: insulating and constraining devices.

For all their virtues, however, these responses are no panacea. One reason is that, given that both our duties toward future generations and the sources of short-termism are diverse and vary across policy choices, a diverse mix of responses is needed. Another is that institutions that promote intertemporally fair policies not as their primary goal, as insulating and constraining devices do, but as a byproduct of pursuing other goals, like electoral rules or government transparency do, may also be critical to achieving this end, as growing research suggests. A third reason is that both the particular design and the viability of these and similar responses importantly hinges on each country's institutional ecology. Further work linking normative theorizing and empirical research on these matters is, thus, badly needed.

NOTES

1. This contrasts with theories, whose discussion space limits forbid, that define what each cohort owes to subsequent cohorts in accordance to what they receive from past cohorts (e.g., Mulgan, 2006).
2. See Supreme Court of the Philippines, *Minors Oposa v. Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources* (1991); Supreme Court of Chile, *Comunidad de Chañaral v. Codelco División el Saldor* (1997); Hague District Court, *Urgenda Foundation v. The State of the Netherlands* (2015); Hague Court of Appeal, *The State of the Netherlands v. Urgenda Foundation* (2018).
3. On how, and whether, future interests may be represented in present policymaking, see Karnein (2016), Lawrence and Köhler (2017), González-Ricoy and Rey (2019), and Campos (2020).

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